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"Won't it be charming, dear aunt," said Helen Murray, a handsome girl of eighteen, "to go with the Browns to the sea-side? It is very kind of them to think of me. I only hope we really shall go, Aunt Melbourne."

"Why do you doubt it, my love?" asked Mrs. Melbourne, as she looked up from her writing table, and with a peculiar smile awaited Helen's reply.

"Now I know very well what that
smile means, Aunt Melbourne," said Helen, "though it is so arch, and yet so gentle, it is meant to warn me, and it betokens a victory."

"Indeed, Helen, I never before heard so much made of a smile," observed the placid and still beautiful Mrs. Melbourne. "Explain yourself, love, and tell me the necessity of the warning, and the nature of the victory."

Helen Murray left her harp, which she had been playing, and seating herself in a low chair near to her aunt, said, "In the first place, dear aunt, you have often told me not to rely on professions, especially on those of weak and vain people; and, in the next place, you have assured me that Mrs. Brown is made up of them, and that she is so thoroughly selfish, and so entirely bent on amusement, that these qualities overpower her good-nature and generosity nine times out of ten. Thus, your smile, Aunt Melbourne, and who
can smile like you—tells me that I ought not to trust Mrs. Brown’s promises, and that you believe I have at last ceased to do so. Is it not so?”

“Really, Helen, you have read my thoughts aright,” said Mrs. Melbourne, “and I suppose my smile was this true and faithful interpreter. I must beware how I betray myself in future.”

“IT is of no use, dear Aunt Melbourne,” exclaimed Helen; “at least, you cannot deceive me. I know always what you mean without your saying a word; and what between your dark speaking eyes, and your expressive mouth, I care not even for the meaning smile, though, to be sure, I do welcome that smile as a sign of returning cheerfulness, after a long long year of deep sorrow;” and Helen threw her arms round the neck of her aunt, who sobbed on her bosom, and whispered blessings on this child of her warmest affections.
Mrs. Melbourne soon recovered herself, and Helen had just resumed her seat at the harp, when the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and a handsome Clarence stopped at the gate of their cottage. Helen ran to the window. "The Browns, I declare, dear aunt," she exclaimed. "No doubt they are come at last to settle the day of our going to Hastings. How very kind."

The next minute Mrs. Brown was shown into the room. She embraced Helen, and warmly shook hands with Mrs. Melbourne. She was gorgeously dressed. Her gown was of such rich material, and so capacious, that the cottage doors would scarcely admit it, as the figure it encircled was of considerable dimensions.

Mrs. Brown was about fifty, but she really looked ten years younger, and in dress and manners she was quite a girl. She was not ill-looking, though every feature was in itself plain, and her com-
plexion would have been intolerable but for the aid of art, that tinged the yellow with the roses' hue. There was something frank and hearty about this lady that gained her friends, and had she been tolerably lady-like, she might have gone through the world with more credit to herself. Her vulgarity was often annoying, particularly where she considered herself intimate, as she did at Mrs. Melbourne's. Her company manners were not much better, at least they were as far removed from those of a gentlewoman, but they were less troublesome. Enough, however, of description. Mrs. Brown will have no difficulty in displaying her own character, and it will be fully developed in the progress of our history.

She soon fell into her usual style of conversation—she talked away of her neighbours, of her parties, of her girls, and her boys. Helen sat on the pinnacle of expectation and hope, and
found it difficult to go on with the work she had taken up. At last there was a pause, and Helen ventured to say, "Where is Matilda to-day, and why did not Henrietta come with you, Mrs. Brown?"

"I am sure I don't know, Miss Murray," said Mrs. Brown. "They had some plan of their own for this morning, I suppose. They never tell me what they are going to do, and as long as their father is satisfied with them, I shall not complain. Ned Archer came this morning and wanted to ride with them, but Matilda looked shy on him, and said she had promised to walk to Hereford to call at the deanery, so Ned Archer was huffed, and rode off;" and Mrs. Brown laughed aloud. She then hoped dear Mrs. Melbourne would soon come and stay with her at the Knoll, and turning to Helen, she said, "The girls want to have you, dear, very much. I will come again soon,
and then we will arrange a day for sending the carriage."

"And shall we go to Hastings soon, do you think, Mrs. Brown?" asked Miss Murray.

"Heaven knows," replied the lady, shrugging her shoulders. "John tells me he can't leave the office."

Helen looked more amused than disappointed, and Mrs. Brown could not but perceive it.

"Well, Helen," she continued, "We will see about it. Depend upon it we will go somehow, and you shall be of our party; and you, too, my dear Mrs. Melbourne—the sea air will do you good in every way. But you must first come to us for a few weeks, and I will, in the meantime, send you some grapes, and the girls will bring you flowers"—and the important lady affectionately kissed the aunt and niece and drove off to call on Lady Crawford, who had visited her because Sir Charles Crawford had a
suit pending, of which Mr. Brown had the management, and Sir Charles had desired his lady to be civil to the wife of his lawyer.

Mr. Brown was a shrewd man of business, with excellent abilities, but his education had been of a very secondary order, and he had never been able to acquire gentlemanlike manners and habits, though of late years the nature of his business, and his increasing fortune procured him an entrance into good society. Every one liked Mr. Brown, and every one considered him a man of strict honour. His house was frequented by the best society the neighbourhood afforded, and his dinners were pronounced the very best in the world. Some few families held back from associating with the Browns, calling them upstarts and vulgar—and others went as seldom as possible, not quite approving of the flirty off-hand manners of Mrs. Brown and her daughters. But,
generally speaking, Mrs. Brown contrived to visit every one, and her "ways and means" for the accomplishment of this would have done credit to a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As soon as this said lady had driven away from Mayfield Cottage, for so Mrs. Melbourne's ivy-covered house was called, Helen Murray eagerly asked her aunt if she thought the flowers, the fruit, the few weeks' visit, the journey to Hastings, were each and all to end in professions.

"I hope not, my dear girl," said Mrs. Melbourne, "for your sake; but set not your heart on any of these pleasant things. I did so for years, dear Helen, but knowing the fallacy of such promises, I am anxious you should only receive them as they are meant, merely a mode of being agreeable for the moment, and the next to be forgotten."

"Well, aunt, I detest professions,
and every one who makes them," exclaimed Helen.

"That is too strong a feeling, my love," replied her aunt. "Detest no one, though it is very allowable, and proper too, to dislike their faults. Let it be a caution to you, Helen, to avoid such. We may always learn something from others, and quite as much, in my opinion, from their failings, as we can from their virtues."

"There is no danger, Aunt Melbourne," said Helen, looking very grave, "that I shall ever promise what I do not intend to perform. You have too carefully educated me for that, and too early instilled into me the love of truth and the hatred of the despicable vice of lying."

"I do not suppose, Helen," said Mrs. Melbourne, "that Mrs. Brown, or any other of our professing acquaintance, wilfully tell an untruth; at least, it is not a premeditated one. It is too much
the custom of society to allow of overstrained expressions of regard and pleasure, so that hyperbole has become the common mode of speaking, and is no longer confined to the language of books. It is a bad style in every sense, and one, I am sure, you will carefully avoid."

"I wish, Aunt Melbourne, we were not so intimate with the Browns," said Helen.

"And why so, my love?" asked Mrs. Melbourne.

"Because," replied Helen, "I like them less every time I see them."

"And yet," remarked her aunt, "you will be a little disappointed if you do not go with them to Hastings."

"Yes," said Helen, "but on the whole it will be as well, perhaps, that I should not."

"Why do you think so?" inquired her aunt.

Helen blushed and said, "I hope I am not wrong, Aunt Melbourne, but I
always feel ashamed of acknowledging
my intimacy with Mrs. Brown to those
who hold themselves aloof from her
parties; nay, even to those who go to
the Knoll much more than I do. She
is certainly very vulgar, dear aunt.”

“There can be no doubt about it,
my love,” said Mrs. Melbourne. “Cir-
cumstances threw me much into her
society at one time of my life, but I
never could find pleasure in the inti-
macy that naturally arose, and I had
some difficulty in managing myself so
as not to offend or hurt Mrs. Brown’s
feelings. However, I contrived to keep
friends with her always, and your uncle,
who knew Mr. Brown’s worth, was de-
sirous I should do so. No ill conse-
quences could arise from it; it was
merely an annoyance. One great satis-
faction attending it has been that I have
often found an opportunity of defending
her upon many points, as I believe her
to have a good heart and a kind dis-
position. But now, my dear Helen, that you are older, and that I cannot always be at your side, I am very desirous that you should not be so much with the Browns. It is not, dear girl, that I cannot trust you. It is that the world is very apt, and properly so, to judge of people by their companions, particularly the very young; so, if you meet my wishes, it will be as well for us to withdraw ourselves, by degrees, from the Browns. Since my affliction I have never stayed there, you know, and it is easy to avoid it."

"Yes, dear aunt, but what am I to do?" asked Helen.

"Time will decide that for you, my love, and in a way, perhaps, that may cause you a little pique," replied Mrs. Melbourne.

"What do you mean, Aunt Melbourne?" said Helen, proudly.

"I mean, love, that though you think yourself equal to, nay, superior to the
Browns, that Mrs. Brown would deem you quite unworthy the honour of becoming her daughter—and she has fears on that head, or I am much mistaken,” said Mrs. Melbourne.

Helen Murray looked very indignant, and quickly said, “Aunt Melbourne, you don’t suppose I would condescend to listen to young Brown for a moment. No, indeed. He was very well as a boy, an Etonian, but now—I would sooner die an old maid than have Jack, as his sisters call him.”

“Gently, my love,” said her aunt, walking up to her angry little niece, who looked remarkably handsome in her pet, “if you are so violent, I shall suspect your vanity is wounded; if not, this warm little heart”—and Mrs. Melbourne placed her hand on it. “Come, my love, let us waste no more time on this topic. It only wants half an hour to dinner, and I promised Letty we would be punctual, as she is going to visit the
poor woman who was so much hurt, as soon as we have dined, and these autumnal evenings close in early."

The aunt and niece separated, and when dinner was announced by the good Letty, they entered their little cheerful dining room, which was brightened by a glowing fire, and they sat down to a well-spread and neatly arranged table. And here it will be proper to leave them, and to give a short sketch of their characters and circumstances.
CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Melbourne was a widow. Her husband had been dead a twelvemonth at the time our history commences. He had held the living of Mayfield for fifteen years, and, on his death, which was sudden, Mrs. Melbourne had removed from the vicarage to a small cottage on the outskirts of the village. Her inclinations led her to remain in a place where she was known and
greatly beloved; from prudential motives also she deemed it wise to settle herself in a house, the removal to which would be inexpensive. This was done immediately, though the present incumbent of Mayfield had begged the widow of his predecessor not to think of leaving the vicarage for a few months, as he could locate himself anywhere, not being a married man. However, Mrs. Melbourne acted as she always did, without any consideration for self, and fortunately was able to rent a cottage that was well suited to her confined circumstances, for Mr. Melbourne had not saved anything. He had ensured his life, and knowing the moderate wishes of his excellent wife, he had not hoarded up money which he deemed scarcely to be called his own, but had spent it in his parish, and had gladdened many a heart by his judicious charities. The living itself was not a large one, but by careful
management, and by the avoidance of anything at all approaching to extravagance, the Melbournes had been able to live most happily, surrounded with all the comforts of life, and with some of its luxuries. Mr. and Mrs. Melbourne had had an extensive acquaintance, as every one had sought their society. They had visited occasionally, but they never allowed pleasure to interfere with their duties, and as Mr. Melbourne did not keep a curate he had often been obliged to refuse himself to his friends, and Mrs. Melbourne never went out without him.

They were both well connected and had married young. At first Mr. Melbourne had only a curacy, with no great prospect of ever having anything better. However, when his rector died, one of his livings, for he was a pluralist, was given to Mr. Melbourne at the express desire of the parishioners; and, as his politics happened to
coincide with the cabinet of the day, the Lord Chancellor was pleased graciously to accede to the wishes of the good people of Mayfield. The Melbournes had lost three children in infancy, and Mrs. Melbourne had suffered both bodily and mentally on these occasions to such an extent that she had for some years been a delicate person, but, possessing a very strong mind, and naturally active, she had struggled long against her bodily ailments; and, during the life time of her husband, she had never relaxed from her many and important duties as the wife of a clergyman. This last blow, however, had much altered her, and she was now as delicate as she looked, and very little able to bear fatigue or excitement. On the first shock occasioned by the sudden illness of Mr. Melbourne, who only lived two days after his first seizure, she was utterly powerless. But, afterwards, her good sense and
piety prevailed, and her calm and resigned demeanour led few to guess the sufferings which she endured. It was well for this afflicted and loving wife that she had still a duty to perform towards one who was little less dear to her than if she had been her own child.

Helen Murray was an orphan. The only child of Mrs. Melbourne's only brother. Her mother had died in giving her birth, and Colonel Murray had fallen in a foreign land. Helen had been left to the care of her maternal grandmother till she was ten years of age, and when that old lady died the poor orphan had been sent, at the particular desire of her father, to his favorite sister, Mrs. Melbourne, who had received her with affection, and educated her with care. Mr. Melbourne had become strongly attached to his little niece, and he had taken great pleasure in assisting his wife in the
task she had undertaken—a task no two people could be more competent to perform, and Helen Murray did ample credit to the pains they had taken with her. She was very handsome when first she took up her abode at Mayfield vicarage, and each year her beauty was increased by a greater display of intelligence. Her complexion was dark, and so were her eyes and hair. She had a brilliant colour, and great sweetness of expression. Her figure was slight, and she was not tall, but her carriage was graceful, and her manners gentle and winning. Her power of acquiring knowledge, or of gaining accomplishments, was far beyond the common average, and she had a comprehension that surpassed that of most women. Helen, however, though in possession of so much beauty and sense, and of so many desirable qualifications, was not faultless. She was very hasty, and very proud, and she
was apt to treat with contempt those who were inferior to her in intellect. To the poor she was ever kind. They were too decidedly beneath her in station to interfere with her, but to girls in her own class of life she held herself distant and cold unless they were distinguished by merit of some sort. Her uncle and aunt had endeavoured to counteract these faults, and in part, had been successful. Still they would burst forth, and show how powerful nature is over the most careful education. Helen had attained her thirteenth year when her father was killed at Bhurtpoor, in which action the Colonel had greatly distinguished himself. Though she had not seen him since she was a child, her grief was long and violent. She had constantly been in the habit of writing to, and hearing from him, and she was proud of his reputation and of his position. His love she had never known, but she
had been looking forward to his return, and to having a home with him. She now felt herself hopeless and alone. Soon, however, the kindness and affection of her uncle and aunt Melbourne restored her to hope and cheerfulness; and she had, for the last five years, been completely happy with them, and her young heart had clung to them with child-like love and confidence. Her uncle's death she had mourned sincerely, and she had devoted herself to her afflicted aunt as much as an attached daughter could have done, and happy did it make Helen Murray to perceive that her gentle suffering relative found some comfort in her tenderness.

Helen had a small fortune of her own left to her by her grandmother. Her poor father had never had more than his pay, for he was descended from the younger branch of a noble house, and money had always been scarce in his family.
The change from the vicarage to the cottage was not quite relished by Helen, but she did not once complain, and she entered into all her aunt's plans of economy and retirement with cheerfulness. Helen continued her usual duties in the school and village, as there was no one to take her place, for Mr. Clive, the new Vicar, was quite a young man, and had neither wife, mother, nor sister. Mrs. Melbourne, for some time, was unable to exert herself in any way, and poor Helen, for many weeks, feared her aunt would sink into a low state of spirits, from which it would be difficult to rouse her. She endeavoured to interest her in her usual pursuits, and, aided by Mr. Clive, to whom Helen unscrupulously unfolded her fears, Mrs. Melbourne was induced, after a few weeks of complete inaction, to see her poor neighbours, and to minister, as formerly, to their wants; and when the aunt and niece are introduced to our
readers, Mrs. Melbourne was taking the same active part in the parish as during her husband's life time, only, that her charities were obliged to be more circumscribed, though in reality rather more was given away, as Mr. Clive was exceedingly charitable, and he frequently gave his money, and his time, too, to those recommended by Mrs. Melbourne as being worthy of the one or requiring the other.

Thus time and circumstances had combined to soften the poor widow's grief, and Mrs. Melbourne could now look back on the past without dismay, and on to the future with hopes of usefulness and contentment. Her niece was now her centre of interest. She well understood her character; and her great anxiety was to guard her from any unhappiness that care and prudence might avert. Mrs. Melbourne did not wish to shut her up from the world, especially as Helen's inclination was
strongly on the side of entering into it. Mrs. Melbourne only desired she might see it under proper guardianship, and not being very able to go from home much herself, she determined to allow her niece to visit occasionally a few chosen friends with whom the most scrupulous could not object to trust a young girl. Thus the aunt and niece lived peacefully, nay, almost joyously together, for Mrs. Melbourne's spirits were returning, and Helen was as lively as youth and health could well make her. She was of very active habits, and occupation was her happiness; and whether it was a ball, or teaching a class in the school, whether she was weeding her borders, or painting one of the choicest of her flowers, energy was the prevailing feeling; and now for the continuance of our story.
"Jack," said Matilda Brown to her brother who was lolling on a sofa, looking the very picture of idleness and ennui, "will you ride with us to Mayfield to morrow?"

"I don't know," yawned out the son and heir of the rich Browns. "Is Helen Murray at home?"

"Oh, yes," said Henrietta, "or we should not have asked for your company."
“Perhaps I may then,” drawled out the youth—"but I am beginning to think Helen is very proud and inclined to snub me, and I shall not stand that.”

“Nonsense, Jack,” said Matilda. "Depend upon it she likes you; at least, if she don't she is a great flirt, and I will tell her so.”

“Well, Matilda,” remarked Henrietta Brown, “I am inclined to be of Jack’s opinion—once I am sure she liked him, but since the Pembertons came back Helen is quite altered. I don’t believe she will catch them, however.”

“No great catch either,” said Matilda.

“Not for you or me,” exclaimed Henrietta, with our thousands, but for Helen Murray, with no fortune, or, at least, with none worth mentioning. I should say any of the Pembertons would be a wonderful match for her—don’t you Jack?”
"No, not at all, Hetty," replied Jack. "Helen is much too nice a girl for any one of them, and I mean to have her myself, yet."

"Don't talk so loud, Jack," whispered Matilda. "If mamma heard you, Helen would never be asked here again, for she expects you to marry Sarah."

"She may expect," said Jack, "but I intend to please myself, though to keep my mother in good humour I profess to have that intention. It blinds her to my real feelings for Helen."

"Not quite," said Henrietta, "for she asked me the other day if I thought you cared for Miss Murray."

"And what did you say, dear Hetty," asked Jack.

"I said," replied Henrietta, "that lately you had not paid her so much attention as Lucy Colville, and I changed the subject."

"Very well turned my clever sister,"
exclaimed Jack. "You certainly do contrive to humbug mamma most wonderfully, though she is so sharp."

"Oh, we can always manage her," said Matilda. "It is papa we are afraid of. If he were much at home we should not have half the fun we have, should we, Hetty?"

"Oh, no," replied Henrietta. "But I am in a sad scrape with Beard just now. He is on the point of offering to me. I should refuse him to-morrow, as you both know, but I don't wish to do so, as I find him very useful and not disagreeable to flirt with. I have warded off his avowal to this time, but I fear I cannot much longer. Do let us have some picnics and archery out of him, and then he may pop the question as soon as he pleases, and he will find, to his disappointment, that my professions of regard, which he has called forth, were as little meaning as may be."
"Oh, Hetty, you are a cool flirt, indeed," said her brother. "I am sorry for Beard, and I am almost inclined to tell him not to dangle after you as he does, though his vanity is certainly abundant, to suppose that you, a young girl, would have a man double your age, with no fortune and no rank. He deserves a refusal, so I will egg him on to give us a champagne feast or two, and then let him down gently from his pinnacle of hope."

"No, indeed Jack," said Henrietta, "he shall offer, as I want a long list of boobies to show my friends. But Matilda," added Henrietta, "here is Ned Archer, he is come to make up the quarrel."

"He will find it difficult, I think,' said Miss Brown.

Major Archer was announced, or, rather, he announced himself, for he stood upon no ceremony with the Browns. "Well, my lasses," he exclaimed,
"how are your tempers this morning. I come loaded with offerings," and he pulled out a case containing three handsome rings, and a paper with three packets of French gloves. "Where is madam this morning? She must have her choice; that's proper, is it not Matilda?" and he shook her again by the hand.

"Mamma may have them all for what I care, Major Archer," said Matilda Brown, with evident pique.

"Come, come, my bonny girl," said Archer, sitting down beside her, "I shall begin to think you are jealous of the old lady if you remain so sulky. I had my suspicions last night that such was the case. God love you, my pretty lass. I never in my life liked middle aged coquettes, and you know girls that your mother is one. Come, Matilda, choose a ring, and here is the packet of white gloves for you;" and the gallant Major saluted the still pouting
Matilda, who, half angrily, half in fun, boxed his ears for his impertinence, as she called it.

Jack laughed outright, and Henrietta declared Beard never went so far as that in his life.

Mrs. Brown now came into the room, and she seemed to be in high dudgeon. "Major Archer," she said, "I wish you would not bring that great dog with you; he has frightened my poodle into fits."

"Zounds, madam, I am very sorry," said Archer. "Here, Nelson, Nelson," and an immense Newfoundland puppy leaped through the open window, and crouched at his master's feet. "Lie down, sir," continued the Major, holding his hand over the dog's head. "I thought, my dear Mrs. Brown, you professed to like dogs."

"And so I do, Major," said the lady, "but not puppies, and the older they are the more insufferable;" and Mrs.
Brown laughed aloud at her own wit, which she thought might possibly show the Major that he had incurred her displeasure. He little cared for her sarcasm, and knew well how to restore the lady to good humour. He approached her, and sitting down beside her he declared he had never seen her look so handsome as when she tried to frown on one who was always her devoted servant, and who had now come to present her with a bauble not at all worthy her acceptance, but which he hoped she would honour him by wearing—and he placed a handsome ring on her finger, and kissed the fat fair hand of the buxom Mrs. Brown. He gave Matilda a side look, which was meant to profess love, and he turned his bold eye on Henrietta as much as to say, you know this is humbug, and that my professions to you are sincere.

The girls were now reminded of the time, by the groom leading round their
PROFESSIONS.

riding horses, and they scampered out of the room, for the Miss Browns had not been taught to walk. Jack went after them, as it was one of his pleasures to teaze his sisters when at their toilettes; and, as Jack was a pet brother, they never refused admitting him to their rooms.

The long equipment of the young ladies gave Mrs. Brown time to twit Major Archer for his neglect of her, and to ask him why he did not come to her boudoir, as had been his custom, instead of flirting with her daughters, who were two foolish girls, who would never care for him, he might be assured.

The Major made his peace as well as he knew how, and when the Miss Browns again appeared, their mamma was all smiles, or rather, all laughter, for she never did any thing by halves; and her spirits, bad or good, were always displayed either by a rude manner or a broad grin.
The Major now ventured to propose to escort the equestrians, and, without waiting for permission, he ran round to the stables and joined the young ladies just as they rode out of the paddock into the highway, and leaving them to pursue their noisy mirth, our readers must accompany Mrs. Brown in her afternoon's occupations.

She first wrote a few hasty lines of excuse to a dear friend in Wales, who was expected at the Knoll on a visit of some weeks, but who would now be in the way, as she was a serious person and a gentlewoman, for Mrs. Brown had made engagements for all sorts of fun and numerous parties with Major Archer. She would not entrust this important letter to a servant, as, if it miscarried, the friend might appear, for there was only just time for its reaching her before she purposed being *en route* to the Knoll. Mrs. Brown's professions of sorrow at being obliged to put off Miss Knox were
short and pithy, and bore such apparent marks of sincerity that the unsuspicous friend never dreamed that the sudden illness of the cook, and the ill conduct of the butler, who must be turned away, were clever inventions of Mrs. Brown, in order to rid her of a visitor, never suited to her taste, and now, most decidedly, an objectionable one.

After this Mrs. Brown dressed in a smart little straw bonnet, and a simple blue muslin robe, with one of her most juvenile looking mantles, set off to walk to Hereford, which was only half a mile from the Knoll. Her poodle was her companion, and her first object was the Post Office. There she safely deposited her clever little letter, and then hastened on to the library, as the hour of closing it was fast approaching. She found two or three of her acquaintance there choosing books.

"Well, Mr. White, said Mrs. Brown
to the librarian, a pale weakly looking young man, who seemed weary of his occupation, almost of his life, as he stood surrounded by the different claimants for the last volume of the last new novel. "Good heavens," continued Mrs. Brown, "you don't mean to say the ______ ______ is out, really out."

"Yes, madam, we received it three days ago," replied the mild Mr. White.

"And not sent it to me," exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Oh! you false man, I shall never like you again, White."

The young librarian's pale cheeks were for a second as bright as scarlet, "but give it me now," continued Mrs. Brown.

"It is not at home, madam," said Mr. White.

"Who has it?" demanded Mrs. Brown.

"The last volume is at the deanery, madam," answered the librarian.
“Good gracious! I thought a Dean never read a novel, eh, Mr. White,” said Mrs. Brown, her good humour returning as she saw a favourable opportunity for the display of her sarcasm. “I am sure that Mrs. Colville cannot appreciate any dull thing beyond her last baby, or her last humdrum party. Oh! James, are you there,” added Mrs. Brown, as a cynical plain looking intelligent man turned his face towards the loud talking fair one. Mr. Hertford approached and extended his hand, and inquired after all at home, in one of the sweetest voices, and with the blandest manners possible. Mrs. Brown asked him when he meant to come and see them.

“When you will have me,” replied Mr. Hertford.

Mrs. Brown shrugged her shoulders, a very constant habit of hers, particularly before she was on the point of
professing what she did not mean.

"Well, James, come when you like, and stay as long as you like. You know the Knoll is always open to you, and you must not wait for an invitation. Dine with us to day."

"Are you alone?" demanded Mr. Hertford.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Brown, "for what I know. John may have invited half a score people, as he often does; and the girls sometimes ask one or two men. But you know there will be plenty of room for you, Mr. Hertford!"

"Thank you," replied Hertford. "I don't think I can come to day. My aunt is not very well."

"Good heavens! James, you don't mean to say the aches and pains of an old woman of eighty would keep you at home," exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "But I see, I see, poor man—out of sorts. The girls shall give you a call, and then you can settle with them"
when you will honour the Knoll with your presence. Adieu, adieu. Be sure White you send me the first volume of the . I am dying to read it. Every one is talking of it, and wondering who is the author. Good morning, Mrs. Young. We shall meet you at the deanery, I suppose, to-morrow. Horrid hot weather it is for September and dinner parties.”

And away tripped the bonny Mrs. Brown, and after entering half a dozen shops, and gossiping and laughing with the principal of each, and trying to think of some trifle to purchase, in order to make an excuse for her entrance, she walked home again, and dawdled away an hour in the boudoir, sometimes reading, then dosing, then nursing her poodle, and wondering why it was not dressing time; and then, when the half hour bell did ring, she made a point of still lin-
gearing on in idleness, as Mrs. Brown had the vulgar notion that being unpunctual and late was a certain proof of not only having had much to do, but of actually having done much.

At last Mrs. Brown thought it time to put herself under the hands of her maid, as she heard her husband's step descending from his dressing room, and she knew that he was already dressed for dinner. The head was completed, and made, by the skill of a first-rate artiste, to look as young and luxuriant as ever Mrs. Brown could desire; and none but a most suspicious man, or an envious woman, would have supposed that all was not placed there by the lavish hand of Nature, and wonderfully allowed to luxuriate there in spite of the generally unsparing hand of Time. Before the mistress had decided the knotty point which of two dresses she should wear, the butler announced, by a tap at
her door, that dinner was served. Mrs.
Brown, as was her custom, received
the summons with perfect nonchalance,
and, in the course of twenty minutes,
she descended to her drawing room,
and was led to her dining table by
Major Archer, who had accepted the
invitation of Miss Brown, with whom
he had made his peace by devoting
himself to her during their ride; and
when the young lady found herself
alone with her sister, she laughingly
assured her that she believed she
should yet secure the heart of Ned
Archer.

"I wish you may, my dear Matilda,"
said Henrietta. "I was determined
you should have fair play this morning,
so I turned sulky, as you saw, and
Ned felt, I am sure, that I will have
none of his nonsense. I believe Ma-
tilda," continued Henrietta, "you are
really fond of Archer. I hope he won't
play you false."
"I half doubt him, Hetty," sighed Matilda. "At least, he is a long while in coming to the point. I never talked to and tried to please a man before, as I have done Ned, without his committing himself in some way. But Archer, just as one thinks—now he will propose—tells me his favourite mare is lame, or his best pointer is lost. He is certainly very provoking, and I declare, Hetty, I am often determined to encourage Powis again, for I believe he still likes me. I would most decidedly, if Archer were not of a better family than the banker."

"Well, sister," said Henrietta, "if it is only his family you care about, I don't pity you much. With our fortunes I think we need not fear marrying well any day of the year."

"Very fine talking, Hetty, for you," exclaimed Matilda!" for you who are only just seventeen, but I am five and twenty, and I am sick of being congra-
tulated time after time, without any result. Archer shall propose, I am determined, or I will know why he does not."

By this time the dressing bell rang, and now the young ladies hastened their toilettes; Henrietta desiring their maid not to mind her, but to make Miss Brown as captivating as possible, for this evening was to decide her fate. The maid did her very best to ensure the victory to her young mistress, and she doubted not of her success, fully understanding the prize she was hoping for, as the Miss Browns hid no secrets from their maid, though they did not often take their papa and mamma into their confidence.

The dinner table was enlivened not only by Major Archer, but by Mr. Downes, who was an acquisition, as he possessed a flow of conversation, a smiling countenance, and a ready laugh, which never fail to render a man welcome.
Mr. Hertford, too, had made his appearance, but it cannot be said that he enlivened the party, for he talked little, and the little he did say was uttered in his most sarcastic manner.

Mrs. Brown was in the highest spirits, for she was in good humour with herself, as her appearance pleased her when she last saw herself reflected in her large cheval glass; and she felt she had gained a victory over Mr. Hertford in his presence at her dinner table, after all he had said. Besides, she no longer doubted she was the great attraction to Archer, and even that Mr. Downes could not resist her fascinations, though he professed not to admire her at all. And last, though not least, in the list of aids and abettors to good spirits, a few glasses of champagne had their exhilarating effect. She quizzed Mr. Hertford till he lost all power of conversation in downright ill-temper, which was, however, displayed in the least
offensive manner possible, by complete silence.

Mrs. Brown perceived, with satisfaction, that Mr. Hertford was still under her influence. Power was her ambition, and the power of a vain vulgar woman over a clever gentlemanlike man was somewhat curious to behold, and more than one person speculated upon it that evening. Mrs. Brown was satisfied, so she left Hertford to his ill humour, her amiability shining forth in strong contrast to his sullen temper. She accepted all the gross flattery of the Major, and seemed little aware how utterly ridiculous she appeared in the eyes of her daughters; who, however, learned no lesson from the conduct of their mother.

Mr. Downes laughed at all he saw, and seemed to countenance it, but he was merely treasuring it up for some particular friend's amusement the next day.
During the lengthened dessert, and as Mrs. Brown was sipping her second glass of port, Archer turned to young Brown and said, "I say, Jack, we saw your Queen of Hearts to day."

Young Brown coloured. Mr. Brown observed his son with curiosity, and Mrs. Brown emptied her glass of wine.

Hetty, with her usual coolness and tact, said, "How very handsome Lucy Colville is? Don't you think so, Mr. Downes?"

"What says John," asked Downes, raising his eyebrows till his forehead was a mass of puckers."

"Jack won't confess to you, Mr. Downes, if he knows you as well as I do," exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Come, girls, let us leave these stupid men, and I hope somebody will have recovered his equanimity before the announcement of coffee."

When Mrs. Brown reached her drawing room, she ensconced herself in her
luxurious arm chair, and drawled out, "where did you see Lucy Colville, Hetty."

"Not at all to day, mamma," replied her daughter. "We rode to Mayfield."

"You are very fond of going there, I begin to think," said Mrs. Brown. "Is Mr. Clive so very charming, Hetty?"

"Lor, mamma," exclaimed Henrietta. "No, Mr. Clive never takes any notice of me. He is in love with Helen Murray, you know."

"The world says so, Hetty, but I doubt it," replied Mrs. Brown. "I think the young lady would not object, but if Clive is as wise as he is handsome, he will not look there for a wife."

"I don't believe Helen cares for him, do you Hetty?" asked Miss Brown.

"Helen is so cold, I don't think she cares for any man," said Henrietta.

"She may marry Mr. Clive, or Mr. Anybody, if she will only let Jack..."
alone," yawned Mrs. Brown, as she sunk into a comfortable nap. And now leaving her and her party, our readers must be introduced to a few more personages who are to figure in our story.
Pemberton Castle was the magnificent seat of Lord Heathdown. Its situation was romantic in the extreme. The river Wye ran through this beautiful domain, and the surrounding woods were the growth of many a century. The Castle itself was of late construction, as the old building had been destroyed by fire about thirty years before. When the present Baron came of age, and succeeded to the vast possessions of
his house, he had immediately set about building the Castle, and although he was almost his own architect, he had made it as comfortable in its every department, as it was perfect in its architectural beauty.

Lord Heathdown had early married the daughter of an ancient family, and she inherited great riches, being an only child. Thus wealth was added to wealth; but, in this marriage, money had not been the object with either party. Lord Heathdown and Louisa Manners had known each other all their lives, and the intimacy of childhood and the friendship of youth had easily and naturally become a warmer sentiment with both. Their union had been a most happy one, and they were blessed with a numerous family of sons and daughters.

For the last five years the Heathdowns had not resided at Pemberton Castle, as their only remaining un-
married daughter had been delicate, and the south of France had been thought necessary for her health. Her life was doubtless prolonged by that mild climate, but the insidious disease had only been baffled for a time, not conquered, and Alice Pemberton had returned home to die.

Lady Heathdown had entered little into society since the death of her daughter, and was only now again beginning to shew herself to the world. Alice had been dead rather more than a year when our tale commences. She had had the comfort of Mr. Melbourne's frequent visits in her last few weeks of illness at home, and had only preceded him to the tomb by a few days. She had been fading, almost imperceptibly, away for years. He, in apparent good health, had been summoned in a moment. The result to both was alike—death, and, from the tenour of their lives, it may be hoped that both were alike
launched into an eternity of happiness.

Lady Heathdown and Mrs. Melbourne had been closely drawn together by their mutual bereavement, and, in their frequent intercourse Helen Murray became intimately known to Lady Heathdown, who contracted an affection for her, little short of a mother's. She thought Helen resembled her lost Alice, and so she really did in many things, especially in her appearance. In short, her ladyship was never so composed, and so little unhappy, as when Helen Murray was by her side; and, if Mrs. Melbourne had not been so lonely, and so delicate, Helen's time would have been pretty equally divided between the castle and the cottage. As it was, she was often with the Heathdowns for a day, but she invariably refused to leave her aunt for a longer time; and the feeling was so highly respected by her friends, that she had never been pressed
to do so. Now, however, that time had somewhat softened Mrs. Melbourne's grief, she insisted that her niece should no longer deny herself or Lady Heathdown the pleasure of staying occasionally at the castle, and Helen had accordingly been a visitor there the week before she was introduced to our readers. It had been a week of pleasant social intercourse.

Lord Heathdown was intelligent, cheerful, and good humoured. His lady sensible, amiable, and ever seeking to give pleasure to others, was quite forgetful of self. One of their married daughters had been staying at the castle. She came for change of air and quiet after a London season, for she had married a gay Baronet who was in parliament. His happiness was made up of excitement. He spoke frequently in the house; he gave many parties and was present at many more. This was his method of enjoying life, and he expected his wife
to sympathise with him in these views. So long as she did this he was the best of husbands, always in good humour, always in excellent spirits; but, if from fatigue, or illness, she flagged, even for a week, in her routine of gaiety, he became sullen and peevish, and upbraided her for want of energy of character and devotion to him.

Lady Ashton's disposition was very like her mother's, most amiable and unselfish; so that she never dreamed of thwarting her husband's wishes, and she thought it quite right to pursue the course of life he desired, though her inclinations were all for the country and its amusements. Nothing but downright inability could induce her to refuse one invitation, or put off one party, so she had gone through the last season without complaint, or, without once having stopped in her gay career, and now she found herself so unwell that even her husband began to think he
had tried her strength too far, and poor Lady Heathdown sighed as she looked at the pale cheek and felt the feverish hand of her darling Emily. However, a quiet month at Pemberton Castle had done so much for her, that no fears could now be entertained that she was consumptive.

Helen Murray's happiest hours were now spent at the Castle, for she had imbibed a strong partiality for the Heathdowns, and her pride was highly gratified by the affection and consideration they showed her on all occasions. The cottage she had never much liked, though no one could have discovered it, not even her discerning Aunt Melbourne. Oh, no, Helen had too kind a heart to show her poor bereaved aunt that she regretted the comforts and luxuries of the Vicarage. Perhaps it ought not to be said she regretted them, but she certainly missed them. And can our heroine be condemned
for this? certainly not. She had been brought up by her grandmother with every possible indulgence, and in the midst of luxuries. She had, when she came to the Melbournes, still been greatly indulged; and, till her uncle's death, Helen had not known what it was to want any thing money could purchase. Now, her aunt's income was so small that Helen's fortune was required to assist it. Hitherto she had had the interest of it for her own use. But now, after contributing what was necessary towards household expenses, Helen found that she must be exceedingly economical in order to dress as became her station, and yet to have something to spare for charitable purposes, and this was a trial to her.

At this time Lord and Lady Heathdown were anxiously expecting their three sons at home. The eldest, the Honourable Ernest Pemberton had been travelling for the last two years. The
second son Frank, was in the army. The youngest was on the point of leaving Oxford, and was thinking of the Bar as an occupation, rather than as a profession. Lewis Pemberton was the pet of the whole family, for many reasons. He was the youngest; he was endeared to them all by the escapes which he had had from early death, both by illnesses and accidents, and he was so amiable and unselfish that not to like him was impossible. At last the week of their arrival came, and, shortly afterwards Helen Murray was invited to go and stay at the castle. She received Lady Heathdown's note just as she was setting out to the school, accompanied by Mr. Clive who had called at the cottage to arrange with Mrs. Melbourne a feast for the school children. Helen's colour heightened and her eyes shone brightly as she exclaimed, "An invitation to the Castle, dear aunt; may I go?"
"When is it for, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Melbourne.

Helen gave her aunt the letter.

"On the 26th—that will do, Helen," said Mrs. Melbourne. "You must not stay over the 31st."

Helen looked vexed.

"Oh, no, Miss Murray," said Clive, "we must have you here at our fete."

"Is it necessary, Aunt Melbourne, that I should return for it?" asked Helen, not at all noticing Mr. Clive's remark.

"Not absolutely necessary, love," calmly replied Mrs. Melbourne, "but as you profess to take an interest in these children, and have never yet been away on a similar occasion, I conclude you will wish to be here."

Helen's temper was tried, but the presence of Mr. Clive kept her silent. She merely asked her aunt what reply she wished her to send.

"Oh, go by all means for a few days,"
said Mrs. Melbourne. "No time is named for your return, so you need not mention it in your note. You can when you see Lady Heathdown, tell her of your home engagement."

Helen considered this a reprieve, and she hoped it might yet be arranged for her to remain over the 31st at the castle, if the Heathdowns wished it; and so she told Mr. Clive as they walked together to the school, for Helen had not a grain of deception in her character, though a considerable power of self-controul. He readily promised her not to fix the day for the village fete, unless quite obliged to do so, and he then hoped she would not think of returning for it unless she wished it.

"How kind of you," said Helen, "but my aunt won't let me off, I fear. Will you help me to persuade her, Mr. Clive?" He laughed at her eagerness, and promised his best assistance.

They parted at the school room door.
Helen attended her class, and, in spite of her thoughts wandering often to the delightful visit before her, she performed her task with her usual cleverness and energy, and so clear were her explanations, and so persuasive her manner, that each little girl thought the hour that Miss Murray stayed the shortest of the day.

Mr. Clive walked home full of deep thought, mixed up of the gay and the sad. The more he saw of Helen Murray, the more he admired her, and yet, he was not blind to her faults. He thought she might in time become all that was excellent. She was very young. She had seen nothing of the world, or, at least, only just enough of it to find it pleasant, so she naturally wished to see more of what appeared to her so charming; and this, surely, was not to be condemned in a girl of eighteen. So argued Henry Clive as he pursued his way to the Vicarage.
And now our readers may peruse a letter Mrs. Melbourne had received by that morning's post.
CHAPTER V.

This letter was from the Honourable Mr. Fairfax, and ran thus:—

"My dear Mrs. Melbourne,

"With sincere grief I learn, on my arrival in England, the death of poor Melbourne, and I also understand that your circumstances are very confined. I hope, when I come down into the country next month, to be able to call upon you, and that I shall then persuade you to come and stay with us. I shall
also be very happy to be of use to you in any way you can point out, as I had a most sincere regard for your husband.

"Believe me, my dear Mrs. Melbourne,

"Yours faithfully,

"Edward Fairfax."

"P.S. I hope to send you a basket of game shortly."

Mrs. Melbourne could not refrain from shedding tears over this kind, though concise letter, from the friend and patron of her beloved husband. It had chiefly been through Mr. Fairfax' interest that the living of Mayfield had been given to Mr. Melbourne; at least, he was in the ministry at the time, and he seconded the views of the parishioners, and strongly urged the Lord Chancellor's acquiescence in them.

The Melbournes had been in the habit of spending a few weeks every year at Avondale with the Fairfax', and two or three baskets of game were annual
presented from their noble friend. He had constantly professed a great regard for Mr. Melbourne, and he had assured him he would on all occasions forward his interest. The Fairfax had been abroad two or three years, on account of the delicate health of Mrs. Fairfax, and had only just now returned. It was very pleasant to the poor widow to find herself not forgotten, and, though she thought she could not be prevailed upon to leave her quiet little home, she was glad to be asked to Avondale, and, at all events, it would be a pleasure to see Mr. Fairfax, and she hoped he might suggest something to improve her little fortune, for she found it very difficult and very trying to be both just and charitable with her present limited income, and she was often obliged to withhold her hand when her heart powerfully pleaded in favour of some object in distress.

Mrs. Melbourne, however, was not a
person to shrink from her duties. She determinately set about doing all the good she could by personal exertion, now that she had so little to give away in the form of substantial help—and she found her reward. Her presence, her encouraging voice, her gentle reproofs when deserved, her humble piety and trust in God set forth in her actions, and pronounced in a few simple words by the side of the sick or dying bed, each day brought their bright sunshine home to her heart; and Mrs. Melbourne learned that charity is not confined to the giving of this world's goods, and that the poor thankfully receive the visits of their superiors when made in kindness and Christian feeling, though they may not benefit them in a worldly way.

Thus, Mrs. Melbourne found cheerfulness returning to her, and though her health was still delicate, she managed to do much that interested her both in
the village and at home; and her cottage was frequently enlivened by friends who seemed delighted to find her once again so like the Mrs. Melbourne they had always admired.

The day now arrived for Helen's visit to the Castle. She was awaiting the arrival of the carriage, and had given her last injunctions to her aunt to take care of herself, when Mr. Clive called.

"Good morning," said Helen, "I am very much obliged to you for postponing the tea drinking, Mr. Clive. I will positively come back for it on the fifth."

"I am afraid you rather assist me to spoil Helen," observed Mrs. Melbourne. "You consider her too much."

"Why, really," said Mr. Clive, "Miss Murray is so very kind in giving her time to the villagers, that some consideration ought to be shown to her wishes. Don't you agree with me, dear Mrs. Melbourne?"

"All very right and proper," said Mrs.
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Melbourne, "if you don't overstep the bounds of indulgence."

"Oh, Mr. Clive is not likely to do that, I am sure," said Helen. "He is constantly correcting me, dear aunt, and telling me what Lady Agnes does and says; and how much I should profit by her society. I wonder, Mr. Clive, what I shall really think of this paragon of yours. I am to meet her at Pemberton Castle, as of course you know."

"Yes," said Henry Clive, "my cousin arrives there to-morrow. I am sure you will like her."

"I don't know that," said Helen. "I am not very fond of perfection. It leaves one so completely in the shade."

"Agnes does not particularly shine in general society," remarked Mr. Clive, "so she will not cast her shadow upon you, Miss Murray."

"But she is very handsome, is she not?" asked Helen.

"Not exactly handsome," said Henry.
"Very sweet looking—but I am a partial judge, for when one knows and loves a person, one always sees some beauty. You will now soon be acquainted with Lady Agnes Scott, Miss Murray, and I shall be disappointed if you are not great friends. But here is the carriage."

In a few minutes Helen had embraced her aunt, and bidding adieu to Mr. Clive, as he handed her to the carriage, she archly said, "I shall soon see you at Pemberton Castle." He shook his head, and when Helen drove away he again entered the cottage. He seemed ill at ease, and very unlike himself.

Mrs. Melbourne talked on various topics, at last she touched upon one that led to a conversation, which explained much to her that she had not previously comprehended. She asked Mr. Clive if he intended to dine at the Castle the following day.

"No," said Henry. "I think it right to deny myself that pleasure."
“Oh! I suppose it would interfere with some parish duty,” said Mrs. Melbourne, “for I know you are very particular on that point.”

“In this instance it would interfere with a duty, but not of the nature you imagine, my dear Mrs. Melbourne,” said Mr. Clive.

“I do not comprehend your meaning,” observed Mrs. Melbourne. “Do explain yourself.”

“May I confide in you,” asked Henry. “May I look to you for advice, such as you would give to a son of your own, were he similarly situated?”

“You may, Henry Clive,” said Mrs. Melbourne, with a serious air and tone. “To what does all this lead?”

“Listen to me, Mrs. Melbourne, and pity me,” said Henry. “For five years I have been attached to my cousin Agnes Scott. About twelve months ago I declared my love to her, and I had the inexpressible happiness of finding it was
returned. When I mentioned my wishes to my uncle Lord Moreton, he made no serious objection, though he candidly confessed that he expected his daughter would have chosen differently, as her beauty, fortune, and accomplishments entitled her to the highest station, and he had even looked to the eldest son of a neighbouring Duke for his Agnes. Such was his really allowable ambition; but it gave way to his affection for his child, and when he found her happiness was dependant on his assent to our union, he did not hesitate to give it. At this time my aunt was abroad with her mother, the Duchess of Axminster. It was deemed best by my uncle, not to mention the subject to her until her return, which was daily expected; but, owing to her mother's increased illness and subsequent death, Lady Moreton's return was delayed for some months. Happy, happy months, for Agnes and for me. Lord Moreton expected some
opposition from his proud wife, but he told us both that he believed he could over-rule it, as he had never found Lady Moreton deaf to the voice of reason, especially where one so dear to her as an only daughter was concerned. My aunt returned, and our happiness was blighted. I will not dwell on the scenes we had to go through; suffice it to say, in her rage she burst a blood vessel, and to save her mother’s life, Agnes gave up her betrothed. We parted in anguish, and we have never since met. My good uncle promised to watch any favorable moment that might arise, when he could perhaps soften my aunt towards me, but that moment has never yet come. Lady Moreton is now, apparently, as well as usual, but her medical attendants tell Agnes that any moment she is liable to a similar illness if at all excited. So my poor dear cousin is doomed to forego her own wishes, or run the risk of hastening to the grave one whom she has the
highest reverence for, as, in all other things, Lady Moreton is a most indulgent mother."

"How strange," exclaimed Mrs. Melbourne, who had listened with interest to Clive's sad history. "Is it your profession, your small fortune, or yourself, Mr. Clive, that your aunt objects to?"

"Not one of these," replied Henry. "It is our relationship. It is a prejudice against the marriage of first cousins. She says she could not, in conscience, give her consent. In short, she will not hear of it, and she positively affirms that it is only for this reason that she objects. Indeed that is the worst part of the business, for it is an objection we cannot over-rule, being good Protestants. Had we been Romanists, the Pope could have aided us; but our case is, indeed, hopeless, unless my aunt were to die, and that of course I cannot desire. No, Mrs. Melbourne, strong as is my attachment to Agnes Scott, I am not so lost
to proper feeling as to wish for the death of her mother. Am I not then in hopeless misery," demanded Henry, as he threw himself on a couch.

"Indeed, Mr. Clive, I am exceedingly grieved to know all this, but not greatly surprised," sighed Mrs. Melbourne.

"Had you then heard my sad tale from another," eagerly demanded Henry.

"Oh, no, assuredly not," replied Mrs. Melbourne. "But I have been certain for some time that you were an unhappy man."

"How strange," said Henry, "how very discerning you must be. I tried, and I thought I had succeeded, in hiding my misery from this new little world I am thrown into. In order to do this I have mixed much more in society than my inclination led me to do. I have courted mirth—mirth in every shape, I have shunned solitude. I have smiled at nothings, and I have laughed when my heart has been very heavy."
"True, true, Mr. Clive," said Mrs. Melbourne, "and, in this neighbourhood you have consequently acquired the character of being a lively person, fond of company, and always the life and soul of merriment."

"At all events, then, I escape pity," said Henry, "and that is a certain good, for the pity of every-day people is one of the last things I desire. But sympathy, dear Mrs. Melbourne, is another thing, and that I do require, and I am sure I have found it in you."

"You have indeed, Mr. Clive," replied Mrs. Melbourne. "I only wish I could see some hope, however distant, of happiness for you; your only chance of it is to forget your cousin."

"I have tried that," said Henry, "nay, I have even endeavoured to love again, and if it had been possible, I have seen beauty and sweetness enough to win me in your charming niece, Mrs. Melbourne."
But, attractive as she is, as she must ever be, her charms are not irresistible to the lover of Agnes Scott. Nothing short of that position could have secured me from the fascinations of Miss Murray, though I have every reason to believe my suit with her would not have been prosperous."

"Indeed, I never speculated on that subject Mr. Clive," said Mrs. Melbourne. "Helen likes you exceedingly as a friend; your intimacy has been that of a brother and sister, and I candidly tell you that you are not, I think, the person to attract Helen’s fancy; and it is said, perhaps truly, that we women never strongly attach ourselves where our fancy is not pleased."

"Oh, I am quite certain of one thing, Mrs. Melbourne," said Mr. Clive, "that Miss Murray’s heart is in no danger from me. Her manner is so natural, so familiar, her conversation so artless, so confidential, I may say, I know she
always thinks of me as a *middle* aged respectable man,” and Henry laughed, “to whom she may confess her faults, and from whom she may receive advice, though I am only six and twenty. I consider it fortunate that my heart was preoccupied before I knew Miss Murray, for it is better to love hopelessly, knowing your passion is returned, than to love one who is insensible to you, and who cannot sympathize with you.”

“It may be more gratifying to your self-love,” remarked Mrs. Melbourne, “but assuredly it is a greater degree of unhappiness to love and *be* loved, without a prospect of a union, than to love one who cannot return it.”

“And why so?” asked Henry.

“Because, in the first case, you feed on the vanity of knowing you do not suffer alone, and, in the other case, you conquer your feelings from a sense of pride. Unrequited affection is never of long continuance.”
"I believe you are right, Mrs. Melbourne," said Henry.

"But now tell me, ought I to dine at Pemberton Castle whilst Agnes is there?"

"Have you made any promise not to meet your cousin?" asked Mrs. Melbourne.

"No, none in the world. All promises were on Agnes' part. I made none," sighed Henry.

"Then," said Mrs. Melbourne, "your honor does not require you to stay away. It is then for your consideration how far your presence may affect the happiness of Lady Agnes."

"I believe she would wish me to go," said Henry. "She is desirous we should meet as usual, as near relations. She has told my uncle this, and he communicated it to me a few months ago, and even invited me to Moreton Court."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Melbourne, gravely, "the third consideration is, how
will your going to Pemberton Castle affect yourself?"

"It is just that which I cannot decide," said Henry. "To see Agnes would drive me mad, were I to find her cold and formal; and if she were kind and affectionate, even as she used to be before I declared my love, I should be perfectly wretched when I left her with the certainty that she can never be more to me than a cousin."

"With such feelings," said Mrs. Melbourne, "I seriously advise you not to meet Lady Agnes Scott."

"Yet how impossible to resist the temptation," exclaimed Henry.

"Very difficult, but not impossible," replied Mrs. Melbourne.

"I see you think me weak and wavering," said Clive, "but I will try to act right, and when next I see you, I hope you will not utterly condemn me. Thank you, dear Mrs. Melbourne, for your advice and sympathy. I really feel
a happier man for thus opening my heart to you."

"Be assured, Mr. Clive," said Mrs. Melbourne, "that I will not betray your confidence."

"I am certain you will not," said Henry. "I am glad I have had the courage to speak openly to you. I have, I feel, ensured a friend whose advice will be given in kindness and wisdom, and I wish to be guided by it. May I see you to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes, you know you are always a most welcome visitor here, Mr. Clive," answered Mrs. Melbourne; "and you may be quite certain that I shall speak with candour, and that whenever you honor me by asking my advice, you will find me most ready to give it, though I cannot flatter myself that you will follow it as a matter of course."

"In the present instance I hope I shall be able to do so," said Clive. "I do not think I am at all in a state of
mind to judge for myself, and women, generally, in affairs of the heart, see much more clearly than men the proper line of conduct to pursue. Good morning, dear, kind Mrs. Melbourne, to-night's consideration will perhaps decide my fate, and may to-morrow find me less miserable." And Henry Clive left the cottage.

Mrs. Melbourne had very early in her acquaintance with Mr. Clive contracted a great regard for him. She had always thought him a melancholy young man, and had observed this to her niece, and Helen was thus led to remark it too. The aunt and niece came to the conclusion that the handsome Mr. Clive was in love, and Helen thought, perhaps, his love was not requited, for handsome as he decidedly was, and clever, and high born, and good, and very, very agreeable, Mr. Clive was not a man that every girl would fall in love with. Her aunt quite differed from her in this opinion, though
she rejoiced in Helen's insensibility, as she had early been convinced that Henry Clive's admiration of her niece was not likely to exceed the bounds of friendship, though the gossiping world had very soon settled that Miss Murray would not be long away from the vicarage.

Mrs. Melbourne then had been quite right in her supposition as regarded Henry Clive, and she sympathised deeply with him. She thought long and intently on all he had confided to her, and she anxiously awaited the morrow to learn what would be his line of conduct; and that evening her thoughts were divided between the unhappiness of Henry, and the pleasure she well knew Helen was enjoying in the society of the Heath downs and their friends.
CHAPTER VI.

The reader must now picture to himself the groups of ladies and gentlemen who assembled on a fine morning in September at Brynmore Wood; one of the loveliest spots in Herefordshire. There was Mrs. Brown, the queen of the party, looking, even for her, unusually young; by her side was Sir Trevor Dolman, with a countenance strongly mixed up of the amorous and the sour. There was Archer, actually at bay, and with
little prospect of escape from the toils Matilda Brown had contrived to cast around and about him; and that moment he would have given up his hope of the baronetcy to have escaped from the determined purpose of that determined young lady.

There was Henrietta Brown, listening to an avowal of love from the persevering Beard, who swore by every oath he thought becoming an amorous man that he would take no denial; and each word he uttered increased the fiery hue of his face and of his scantily covered pate, and added to the scorn and contempt of his handsome listener.

There was old Brown making himself particular by his perfect indifference to the family scenes acting around him; and his son Jack was fast asleep, having declared it was the most stupid party he had ever made one of, and that there was no girl there worth flirting with.

Augustus, the younger son of the
Browns, a fine handsome boy of eighteen, was amusing himself by sketching one or two of the above mentioned groups. This he did in exquisite style, allowing his pencil to indulge in the ridiculous to the full extent of its power. Leaning over his shoulder, with his eternal smile and advanced chin, stood Mr. Downes, ever and anon exclaiming "capital, Augustus. How like Beard, even in its exaggeration. Your mother, too, exactly, and not much over done either," and when Archer appeared on the paper, down on his knees imploring, as it were, for his life, Downes burst into a loud laugh, and held his lean sides as though fearful that the continued shaking would dislocate his ribs. This merriment roused the different parties, and served to collect the stragglers in the distant parts of the wood, and to remind the nearer groups that they possibly were observed.

Sir Trevor offered his arm in his lover
like manner, which was somewhat of the stiffest, to Mrs. Brown, who had now risen from her grassy seat, and began to arrange her dress, which was, as usual, of exquisite materials, but quite unsuited for the occasion, and not quite compatible with her age and figure. But still, Mrs. Brown looked better so dressed than most other women of fifty would have done, and whether or no she thus concealed the number of her years from her admirers, it is quite true that men of all ages and conditions seemed to like to flirt with the buxom, odd Mrs. Brown, and she was seldom neglected either at a pic-nic, or archery meeting, or a ball. Sir Trevor Dolman was just now her most devoted swain. He was a man about her own age, perhaps her junior by a few years, at least, he looked so, for his figure was slight, and his visage showed more trace of the lines of ill-temper than of time. His bushy hair too, told no tales, and Sir Trevor deemed himself
quite in the prime of life, and he had no doubt that he would be an acceptable suitor to any young lady in the country; nor was he far wrong, for the Baronet was wealthy and of ancient family, his appearance was, altogether in his favor, and his manners were gentlemanlike; but his overbearing disposition, and his notoriously bad temper were sometimes placed in the balance against the great advantages of the connection; and one girl, at least, would not have exchanged her cottage for his fine residence, endeared to him by the centuries it had belonged to the ancient family of Dolman. But enough of Sir Trevor. This day his devotion to Mrs. Brown had even satisfied her, and she pronounced Trevor, as she familiarly called him, "out and out the best amongst them," meaning her admirers.

Matilda Brown joined the assembled party, leaning on the arm of Major Archer. They both looked fatigued and
out of spirits, and, as soon as possible, Archer dropped her arm, and approaching the remains of their feast, drank off a tumbler of champagne, in the hope of recruiting his exhausted spirits. Henrietta Brown came alone from her shady bower. She looked heated and excited, and she threw herself on the grass beside the yawning Jack, who had been aroused from his slumbers by the laughter of Downes over the caricatures of Augustus, who still went on sketching, and portrayed to the life the whole assembled party. Downes never wearied of seeing his friends made ridiculous, and he determined, in his own mind, to get possession of this sketch book, as he knew a chosen few who would chuckle with himself at this ludicrous display of people whom they really did not like, though they were in daily habits of professed intimacy with them. However, Mr. Downes was at last arrested in his career of ill-natured mirth, for, as he
was intently watching, with extended features, the outlines of the next figure Augustus Brown was bringing out on his paper, he did not immediately perceive who it was intended for. But the tall lank figure sent one pucker from his forehead—the short face dispersed another—the full eye seemed to watch the disappearance of a third, and the up-turned protruding chin dispelled the last furrow; and, as Downes looked on the portrait, if he had then been inclined to doubt who it was meant for, the four or five last touches given to the forehead proclaimed that wrinkled brow his own. He slunk away from the clever young artist, and wandered into the wood in search of serenity. He found it in the shape of Miss Maxwell, who with another young lady of the party, had lost their way. Mr. Downes poured out his wrath to his friend Louisa—denounced the Browns as the most vulgar, disagreeable people in the world, and Augustus as
a pert puppy, who ought to be whipped, put into the office, and kept at the desk till he knew how to behave himself to those in every way his superiors.

"In short, my dear Louisa," said Downes, drawing Miss Maxwell aside from her companion, "I wish you would not be so intimate at the Knoll;" and he offered his arm to Louisa. She took it.

"Why so?" asked Miss Maxwell. "I like the girls exceedingly, especially Henrietta."

"Oh, yes, the girls are good-natured, and not to be disliked, only to be pitied, poor things," said Downes; "but that mother, Louisa, and that younger boy." And Downes looked the picture of misery.

"Mrs. Brown is sadly vulgar," quietly replied Miss Maxwell, "but I think Augustus is really the least objectionable of the family. He is clever and not ungentlemanlike, and I am sure he is often annoyed by the conduct of his mother, and his sisters too."
"I find him excessively forward, Louisa," said Downes; "and I often have to lower him a peg. He has been amusing himself by caricaturing the whole party—me into the bargain." And Downes laughed in bitterness.

"I understand now, Mr. Downes, why you abuse Augustus," said Louisa Maxwell.

"Enough of him, my dear Louisa," exclaimed Downes. "Now tell me, does the Archdeacon talk of the sea this autumn?"

"Papa thinks it would do us all good," said Louisa.

"Nonsense," replied Downes. "I tell you what, Louisa, the Archdeacon wants you away from Hereford. He thinks young Cresswell is sweet upon you; he told me this in confidence."

"And what did you say to papa, Mr. Downes?" asked Miss Maxwell.

"I bid him be easy and be quiet, and I assured him that if I knew his
daughter's taste, she would not be likely to throw herself away on Cresswell;” and Downes pressed the arm of his fair companion, and tried to look unutterable regard. “Did I not judge you rightly, dear Louisa?” he continued. “Confide in me, dear girl; and believe me when I profess myself your best friend.”

“I have no confidence to give,” said Miss Maxwell. “I think, Mr. Downes, we have treated Miss Tollet rudely; pray let us join the party.”

“You are not offended, are you, Louisa?” said Downes. “You know my great regard for you, and you also know how disinterested it must be. I, a married man, with a wife, too, likely to bless me by her presence for many a long year;” and Downes again laughed in bitterness.

“I hope so, indeed,” said Miss Maxwell. “Caroline seems quite well now,” and she walked quickly on.

Downes still retained her arm, and
said, "I admired your poor mother, Louisa. I was then a single man, and you a little girl. She used to say to me, I wish, dear Frederick, you would wait for my eldest daughter; and I promised I would. But, somehow or other, I was entrapped by Caroline."

"What worse than nonsense you are talking, Mr. Downes," said Miss Maxwell. "Oh, there is Miss Tollet! Annie, Annie, why did you leave us?" called out Louisa, and in the next minute they joined her and came in sight of the party, who were preparing for their second repast in the form of tea.

"Here comes Downes and his next wife, Louisa Maxwell," whispered Mrs. Brown to Mr. Knightley, who sat on one side of her.

"Nay, that is scandalous, Mrs. Brown," said Knightley. "Miss Maxwell is too good to be the first wife even of such a humbug as Downes. She had better marry me than wait for him."
"You, Knightley," said Mrs. Brown. "Why what are you better than Downes?"

"This much, my good madam," said Knightley. "He has a wife and a brace of young ones, and I am a bachelor wanting to be married."

"You won't understand me, you false man," said Mrs. Brown, with a gentle tap on his shoulder. "Have you not broken the heart of the pretty daughter of the richest draper in Hereford?"

Knightley winced under the touch of Mrs. Brown, and busied himself with the coffee and the cakes, and changed his place the first moment he could contrive to get his large person out of the small arm chair he had, not many minutes before, secured in order to share the favors of Mrs. Brown with the morose Baronet not so much to please himself as to annoy Sir Trevor; for such was the dislike of these two men for each other, that, in politics or love, or
anything else of much less interest, they made a point of opposing each other, and a spar of words was invariably the consequence of their coming into contact.

The jolly country gentleman had greatly the advantage over the high-born Baronet on these occasions, for Knightley had wit at command, was well informed, had a great flow of language, and, besides, possessed an inexhaustible fund of good humour; whereas Sir Trevor was a dull man, and had never been known to say a good thing in his life, though many a rude one, which he flattered himself was wit. Then Sir Trevor lacked knowledge on most subjects, and he miserably failed always when he attempted an harangue of any kind. His temper, too, as we have before observed, was none of the sweetest.

On the present occasion Mr. Knightley had not joined the party till late in the day, and Mrs. Brown’s cutting remark,
which was as true as it was meant to be severe, completely put him down for the rest of the evening, and those who had not heard the speech wondered why Knightley had come at all, if he could not be agreeable, for he sat in silence, a very unusual thing for him, and soon made an excuse for driving home.

Mrs. Brown leaned over the Baronet, and putting her face in contact with his whiskers, whispered, "I have paid Knightley off this time. What don't you owe me for this revenge?"

Sir Trevor bid her name the reward, and it should be hers.

"A ball this autumn," said Mrs. Brown.

The Baronet hesitated, and at last said, "I will think of it. You are d—ish quick, by Jove. Come, we have had enough of this;" and he arose.

This was a signal for a general dispersion, and the carriages were soon after ordered. Mrs. Brown, wrapped in
velvet and ermine, was persuaded to occupy a seat in the Baronet's dog cart, and the ball at Deerfold was discussed and decided on in that drive home.

The Miss Browns returned as they came, in the handsome equipage of Major Archer; Mrs. Brown's place now occupied by Augustus, and Mr. Beard's by Jack Brown. Archer drove, as was his invariable custom, his handsome bays, and Beard and old Brown had outside places.

The Maxwells had their own carriage, and Downes returned by the side of their coachman, as Louisa Maxwell expressed a wish to have the carriage closed, which made it impossible that Downes should have an inside place.

The rest of the party, consisting of a minor canon, a half-pay captain, and Mr. Powis the banker, made their way to Hereford in a hired vehicle drawn by a jaded beast, which promised them a long cold drive in one of the first
frosts of the autumn; and these three old beaux having gone forth in the morning sunshine, had never dreamed it would be less warm, and so they had left their comfortable old coats at home, and they finished up this charming picnic by one continued grumble all the way to the city; and, on parting at the lodgings of the Captain, they one and all professed an abhorrence of such fetes, particularly in the cold month of September.
“Is my aunt quite well, Mr. Clive?” asked Helen Murray, as he took her into dinner on the second day of her stay at Pemberton Castle.

“Yes, I think so,” answered Henry.

“I sat some time with her this morning.”

“You are very kind and attentive to her always, Mr. Clive, and this makes me less scrupulous about leaving her,” said Helen, as she took her place at
the dinner table. Henry seated himself beside her, and seemed anxious to keep up the conversation.

"I have no greater pleasure than in visiting Mrs. Melbourne," said he. "Besides her invariably kind welcome, she has such a fund of information, and so pleasing a manner of imparting it, that I consider it a high privilege to be classed amongst her friends."

"Indeed, my dear aunt is one in a thousand," said Helen, with animation. "One in ten thousand, I think," interrupted Clive. "I never knew but one woman to compare to her in sweetness of disposition and intellectual attainments," and he sighed deeply. He was startled by a faint echo of his sigh, and turning from Miss Murray he perceived his cousin, Lady Agnes Scott, was seated on the other side of him. Poor Henry! He had spoken to her on his entrance into the drawing room, but no one could have discovered in
what language, so indistinct was the greeting. He was too much agitated to be able to observe, or even to think, how she looked and acted. He quickly passed on, and bowing to Lady Moreton, happily found himself by the side of Helen Murray. Dinner had immediately been announced, and he rejoiced to see he might offer his arm to her.

The eldest Pemberton had taken out Lady Agnes, and, apparently, he was indefatigable in trying to interest her in his relation of the wonders and beauties he had been enjoying in foreign countries. However, a nice observer, and there was one just opposite to him in the person of Lady Agnes' only brother, Lord Leslie, might perceive how his eye sought to catch a glimpse of the handsome Miss Murray.

Mr. Clive soon ceased to address Helen, and sank into a silence and melancholy that could not have passed unnoticed had not the party been very large;
and many of the guests, strangers to him, who, if they noticed him at all, merely thought "how handsome you are, but how excessively stupid."

Helen Murray had been immediately engrossed by her left hand neighbour, Lewis Pemberton, who had never quitted her side for many minutes since her arrival at the Castle. This devotion, too, did not escape the discerning Lord who sat nearly opposite to our heroine. He did not at all know who this very handsome girl was that seemed to have fascinated the brothers, and who also seemed on terms of great intimacy with his cousin Henry Clive.

Lord Leslie had only arrived at the Castle just in time to dress for dinner, so he had merely entered the drawing room to be told to hand out Miss Colville, whom he had met before. This was Lord Leslie's first visit, for many years, to Pemberton Castle. He had been very little at home, as he was in the army,
and his profession had kept him abroad. He had seen much service, and was a brave officer. He had lately returned from India, where he had been in the thickest of the fight, and where he had received a wound, which appeared so materially to have affected his health, that he was compelled to ask for sick leave. His native air, it was hoped, would restore him, and he was already looking better, though he still walked lame, the gun shot having slightly injured the knee.

Lord Leslie immediately recognized his cousin, Henry Clive, though they had not met for some years. He knew all about the unhappy attachment of Henry and his sister, and he pitied both of them as they now sat side by side, in perfect silence, apparently strangers to each other. At last Leslie said, "Clive, how long is it since we met? some eight or nine years, I am sure. Is it not, Agnes?"
"At least eleven, Clarence, since you and Henry parted at Moreton Court," said Lady Agnes, timidly, and in the most musical voice in the world.

At his own name pronounced in tones he so well remembered, and so often had dreamed of, and which he had not heard until now for the last two years, Henry ventured to look at his cousin. Their eyes met, and words were not required to assure both that time and absence had not changed their feelings towards each other.

Lord Leslie saw he had broken the ice, and he now gave his attention to Miss Colville, and asked her after many mutual friends, for they had met at her grandfather's, the Earl of Castleton's, the month before Lord Leslie had embarked for India, and he was rather surprised to find the pretty Lucy Colville still unmarried. She was, at the time of his going abroad, just introduced, and he had been much taken with her beauty.
the few days they had spent together; but he had not seen enough of her to give her a chance of securing his heart; for Lord Leslie, though an enthusiastic admirer of beauty, was not a man to resign himself to its influence if unaccompanied by good sense, good temper, and kindness of heart. Good temper, especially, he thought quite necessary to ensure domestic happiness, and he had always professed himself quite incapable of choosing a wife who was not endowed with this first, in his opinion, of nature’s gifts. He was tolerably certain Miss Colville was sensible, and he gave her credit for kindly feeling, but her countenance was decidedly deceitful if she possessed sweetness of temper. However, Lord Leslie had parted from her with great friendliness, and had for the first year or two occasionally asked in his home letters if Lucy Colville were married. Then he would have forgotten her altogether,
only that Agnes sometimes said, in her dispatches to her brother, your favorite Lucy is still single, and awaiting your return. At last her name was never mentioned between them, and, not until he heard it pronounced by Lord Heathdown that day before dinner, did Lord Leslie give Miss Colville a thought. Now his former admiration seemed revived, and Lucy began to think she had done wisely in refusing one or two unexceptionable offers, for her noble admirer had decidedly a penchant for her. She had for months after her visit to her grandfather lived on the recollections of Lord Leslie's attentions; but, as years rolled on, and she neither saw him nor heard of him, excepting when honourably mentioned in the papers, she had ceased to think about him, and was, in fact, seriously determining to take the next good offer that was not decidedly disagreeable to her, for Lucy Colville was twenty-eight.
All were now fully occupied around them, for Ernest Pemberton had entered into a discussion on pictures with a gentleman opposite to him, who had just returned from Rome; Henry Clive asked Lady Agnes how long she was staying at the Castle?

"Only till Friday," replied her ladyship.

"Will you come and see my new home, Agnes?" asked Henry in a whisper, that no other but the loving Agnes could hear.

"Yes, I will, Henry, to-morrow; and papa will come with me," she replied.

Henry turned his dark eyes on his cousin, and they thanked her more warmly than any words could have done.

"Am I right Agnes," asked Henry, "in being here to night?"

"I think so," said the smiling girl. "Henry," she continued, "what a charming person Miss Murray is; we are great friends already."
"I knew, I hoped you would be," said Clive. "To-morrow I must introduce you to her aunt; you will be delighted with her, and she knows our history, Agnes."

"Indeed," said her ladyship, with evident surprise, "and is her niece acquainted with it?"

"Oh, no," replied Henry; "it was only yesterday since Miss Murray came here, that I confided the past to Mrs. Melbourne."

"Oh," said Agnes, "pray let me know this dear charming old lady."

"Mrs. Melbourne is not old, dear Agnes," said Henry, "she is still a beautiful woman, but in delicate health, and seldom leaves her pretty quiet little cottage."

"Will you then take me to see her?" demanded Lady Agnes.

"Most certainly," replied Clive; "when and how shall you come to Mayfield?"

"Talk to papa about it," said Agnes,
but do not mention the subject in the hearing of my poor mother."

"I suppose she is as obdurate as ever?" asked Henry.

"Alas, I fear so," replied her ladyship. Henry's spirits which had revived during this brief colloquy, now sank into melancholy, and Agnes perceiving the state of his feelings, gently said, "Henry, if we are true to each other, we cannot be utterly miserable. So long as we are both unmarried, we may love on without its being sinful. This conviction is my happiness; let it be yours."

"It shall, Agnes," replied Henry, and amid the din of voices these fond lovers had an hour of uninterrupted enjoyment.

Lewis Pemberton was asking Helen if she had any recollection of him.

"None in the least," was her cool reply.

"How very strange," said Lewis, "for I so perfectly remember you."

"Perhaps so," replied Helen, with
great indifference. "I was only ten years old when I came to a juvenile ball here, which you seem to have such a perfect recollection of. I quite remember," she added, "enjoying myself excessively, and dancing away like a little wild girl, and how prettily I was dressed in a new white frock, and that I had a tiny pair of white satin slippers for the first time in my life, but I do not at all think I could recognize either the names or the faces of any one of my many partners."

"I am quite disappointed, Miss Murray," observed Lewis. "I am only three years your senior, yet I have a vivid recollection of you as you then were; and I should have known you now, without an introduction, for the Helen Murray who was the little belle of my ball eight years ago."

"Oh," said Helen, "was it your ball? then I do recollect, thus reminded, that there was a tall thin pale boy, with his
arm in a sling, one of Lord Heathdown’s sons, and that this fete was called his ball. But I thought that must have been your brother, Mr. Frank Pember-ton, for when I was introduced to him yesterday he said he was an old acquaintance, and had danced with me eight years ago at Pemberton Castle. I then concluded he was the delicate looking boy to whom the ball was given, and I thought I might have congratulated him on his changed appearance.”

“No, Miss Murray,” said Lewis, “Frank was always what he now is, handsome and engaging; but I was that unfortunate unhealthy boy whom I have succeeded in recalling to your remembrance, though with no very pleasureable feelings assuredly;” and Lewis Pember-ton became silent. Helen feared she had wounded the self-love of this very sensitive young man, and she endeavoured to soften his evident disappointment at her own recognition of him, by great
friendliness of manner; but Lewis could not quite forgive her for only remembering his misfortunes.

Lord Leslie had been an attentive observer of Helen during the two hours he had sat opposite to her, and he had been struck with her vivacity so sweetly subdued by extreme gentleness. He thought he had never seen one in whom intelligence of countenance was so strongly portrayed, with a most decided expression of good temper. He fancied, too, that she would have preferred a tete a tete with Henry Clive to Lewis Pember- ton, yet, she bore the total neglect of Clive with perfect good humour, for Henry really forgot, in his present happiness, that Helen had any claim on his attention; nay, he forgot that she was beside him. He only saw, he only heard, his fair cousin in that numerous assemblage. When Helen turned from Lewis, evidently wearied with his subject, and anxious to converse with her more intelligent
neighbour whom Leslie knew had taken her into dinner, she showed no pique at his almost rudeness, but sat in happy silence so long as Lewis would permit her; and when again obliged to listen to him and to answer him, she never lost her amiability. On leaving the table Clive seemed to think, for the first time, that he had been inattentive to Helen, and he said, "Miss Murray, I have to crave your indulgence."

"Did I not tell you," said Helen, with one of her brightest smiles, "that I should be thrown into the shade?"

Leslie heard this too, and he felt anxious to inquire who Miss Murray was. He had no opportunity of doing so until the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing room.

Helen was then at the piano, and his sister was standing beside her. Leslie approached, and at that moment Helen rose from the instrument.

"Clarence," said Lady Agnes, "you
will be enchanted with Miss Murray's playing. Will you oblige me by giving us that sweet waltz again?"

Helen resumed her seat. The brother and sister walked away to a sofa not very far removed, and long before the music ceased Lord Leslie had learned all that Lady Agnes could tell him of Helen Murray.

Our heroine was now surrounded by the lovers of sweet sounds, or those who fancied they were so, and she was actually obliged to demand the assistance of Lord Heathdown to be released from the importunities of the many voices which beseeched her to go on. At last she secured a quiet seat, and soon Mr. Clive approached her. Just then Lady Agnes was led to the harp by Lord Heathdown, and Helen made room for Henry Clive on the couch she was occupying.

"How lovely Lady Agnes is," exclaimed Helen, "you had not at all
prepared me for such exquisite beauty. If her mind and disposition are at all in keeping with her appearance and demeanour, she is indeed perfection, and I no longer wonder she is your paragon. I have lost my heart to her from the first moment she spoke to me," continued Helen. "How have you escaped her fascinations, Mr. Clive?"

Henry was saved the necessity of a reply by the commencement of Lady Agnes' song. It was only a simple Scotch ballad, but her tones, her expression were so deeply feeling, that the most perfect silence prevailed throughout her performance, and when she ceased not a voice was heard expressive of thanks or pleasure. Every one felt it was too exquisite to praise as it merited, and those who delighted in it the most were too deeply touched to utter a word.

Clive covered his face with his hands, and when Helen, after the pause of a
minute, said, "And you never told me this either, Mr. Clive," he quite started and seemed to recollect he was not alone.

"How a few hours have dispelled a mystery of many months," almost whispered Helen as Clive still sat silent beside her. "I do pity you if it be as I suppose."

"Dear Miss Murray, what would I not give," said Clive, "to have your private ear for five minutes. Here we are observed. I dare not say what I would."

Lord Leslie passed behind them at that moment.

"Come with me then to the library," said Helen, rising, "I dare say we shall find it deserted this evening."

"What author are you going to consult, may I ask?" said Ernest Pemberton, who now advanced, and who had caught the last words of Helen.

"Oh, Alison on Taste," quickly replied
Miss Murray. Clive looked his thanks and his admiration of her presence of mind. They moved on, and Ernest felt he should be quite de trop if he followed them, and turning to Lord Leslie, who stood near to him, he asked him if he would walk through a quadrille, observing, that of course waltzing for him was out of the question.

Lord Leslie said, "I dare not dance at all at present, Mr. Pemberton, but let not my inability to do so deter you from proposing what will, doubtless, be agreeable to most of your guests."

Lady Heathdown joined them.

"Mother," asked Ernest, "have you any objection to a waltz or two?"

"I think it rather late to-night," said her ladyship. "Don't you, my lord?"

"I really am quite ignorant of the hour, Lady Heathdown," said Leslie. "But if you were to put it to the vote, I believe the dancers would carry it. At least, I know two of the party
who arranged it even at the dinner table."

"Oh, I am sure that was Lewis and Helen Murray," said her ladyship. Lewis was at his mother's elbow.

"Quite right, dear mamma," said this pet son; "and now where is Miss Murray? I must claim her promise to dance with me; and do you, mother, give orders for lights in the ball room, and set old Mrs. White down to the piano, and just give her a hint to make the notes speak; and remind her, dear mamma, that there is a pedal to cover her blunders."

Lady Heathdown obeyed her youngest son to the letter, and immediately all was in readiness for the votaries of Terpsichore.

Mr. Pemberton led Lady Agnes Scott to the ball room, and Frank engaged Miss Colville. Numerous beaux and belles followed, but Lewis was still in search of Helen.
"Where can she be?" at length he exclaimed aloud, and in no very gentle voice. "I have sent to her room, I have been in both drawing-rooms. My lord, have you seen Miss Murray?" said Lewis, addressing Lord Leslie, who was resting on a couch in the anti-room.

"Not for the last half hour, Mr. Lewis Pemberton," answered Leslie.

"Oh, it is an hour since I had that pleasure," resumed the impatient young man. "Where was Miss Murray half an hour ago, my lord?"

"With Mr. Clive, on their way to the library," replied Lord Leslie.

Lewis hurried thither, but missed them, for as he left the anti-room by one door, they entered it by another.

"You promise me, then," said Clive to his fair companion, "that you will favor my suit."

"As far as is consistent with delicacy," replied Helen. "Lady Agnes, perhaps—"

Leslie rose from the sofa. "Clive,"
said his lordship, "will you introduce me to Miss Murray?"

They both started, for they had not seen Lord Leslie, and they thought no one had been there. He perceived their confusion, but apparently did not notice it. They all three strolled into the drawing room, and Helen was listening with gratified attention to an account Lord Leslie was giving her of a battle in which her poor father had bravely fought, when Clive heard a time-piece strike the hour of twelve. He had serious duties to perform on the morrow, and he now hastened away, having only seen Lord Heathdown, and never having been able once again to speak to his cousin, or to his uncle, without the eagle eye and the open ear of Lady Moreton close upon him; but he had told his tale of love to Helen, and he had asked her to secure, if possible, the promised visit of his cousin to the vicarage on the morrow.
Lady Agnes had been obliged to dance two or three times, though her thoughts were not at all in that amusement, and her partners of that evening, whilst they pronounced her to be exquisitely lovely, wished she were not so silent and inanimate. When she at last complained of weariness, she sought her brother, and they remained in close conversation until the party had dispersed.

Lewis Pemberton had taken another partner on not finding Miss Murray in the library, for he was quite inclined to resent what he fancied was meant by Helen as an affront; but his inclination at last mastered his determination, and he had danced with Helen the second polka. And she had numerous partners for the next, and the next.

About one o'clock the Castle was still, and as the hour of two struck, its solemn tone fell only on sleeping ears; for even Lady Agnes, whose waking thoughts had been painful, was then, from sheer
fatigue, at rest. And even the sensitive Lewis had found that repose on his pillow which his restless day dreams had been calculated to destroy.
CHAPTER VIII.

Henry Clive rose early the following morning, with hopes as bright as the glowing sunshine.

He had a funeral service at eleven. That over, he walked down to the cottage. He found Mrs. Melbourne on the point of setting off to the vicarage; a very unusual thing for her to do at that time of the day, as she had regular hours for every thing, and professed never to deviate from them; and Mrs.
Melbourne's professions were proverbially sincere.

"I am glad you are here, Mr. Clive," said she, as he walked into the cottage drawing room. "I have a letter from Helen, and one enclosed for you, which she wishes me to put into your hand myself." And Mrs. Melbourne gave it to him.

Henry broke the seal with a trembling hand, and after reading the note he gave it to Mrs. Melbourne. It was as follows:

"Dear Mr. Clive,

"I fear you will be made very uncomfortable by my present communication, but I promised to write to you, and I never profess without acting. You must not expect Lady Agnes at the Vicarage to-day. This is all I may say. I shall be at home on the morning of the 5th.

"Yours sincerely,

"HELEN MURRAY."
Mr. Clive turned very pale on reading this inexplicable note, and when Mrs. Melbourne gave it to him again, he tore it into fragments, and declared that so he would tear from his heart the remembrance of the past.

Mrs. Melbourne allowed him time to cool, and then gently said, "I think, Mr. Clive, you are meeting misery more than half way. I see nothing in Helen's note to cause you this discomposure. A thousand things may have prevented Lady Agnes calling at Mayfield, not one of which could she, very likely, overrule."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Melbourne, for trying to comfort me," said Henry. "If Agnes disappoint me now, I am indeed miserable. What had I better do?"

"First tell me, Mr. Clive, all that occurred yesterday," asked Mrs. Melbourne. "Remember I am quite unacquainted with the kind of reception you met with from your noble relations."
"A passing bow was Lady Moreton's salutation," replied Henry. "My uncle shook me cordially by the hand. Leslie was as friendly as possible till just before we parted, when I thought his good night was somewhat cold and formal."

"But Lady Agnes," anxiously demanded Mrs. Melbourne.

"Oh, she was the Agnes of former days," replied Clive. "By accident we were seated side by side at the dinner table, and for an hour or two I was happy indeed."

"Does she see any hope of your union?" asked Mrs. Melbourne.

"Alas, no," sighed Henry. "My aunt remains inflexible, though my uncle loses no opportunity of trying to win her over to our wishes. But though we may never be able to marry, Mrs. Melbourne, Agnes professed her determination to be true to me, and I feel sure she will be so; and I consider myself pledged to her, though I was prevented
telling her so by the ladies withdrawing at the very moment I was about to speak. However, I am happier than I was before this meeting, and I am grateful to you for having urged this visit upon me.

"I did so, Mr. Clive," gravely observed Mrs. Melbourne, "because on due consideration I thought it desirable, as I deem any certainty better than doubt, for nothing is so destructive to happiness as continued alternations of hope and fear on any subject, but especially in love affairs. It now appears to me that your fate is decided—an unmarried life. You best know how far that is calculated to ensure your happiness. It does not to me seem probable that Lady Moreton will change her purpose, and nothing short of that can give you your cousin Agnes. I hope you have done wisely."

Henry could not but see that Mrs. Melbourne thought he had not acted judiciously. He was annoyed. "In every way I am wretched," he exclaimed
"Pray what ought I to have done, Mrs. Melbourne?"

"May I tell you, Mr. Clive?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, candidly, fearlessly," said Henry. "I have no other friend, no other adviser."

"Then this is what I wish you had done," observed Mrs. Melbourne in a serious tone. "Plighted your own faith, if you please; professed yourself unable ever to love another, declared yourself bound by honor and affection to Lady Agnes for life; but you should not have drawn such professions from her. Oh, no, you should have left her free from such engagements. She would then be saved the certain discomfort of having acted contrary to the wishes of her mother. Besides, nothing of the kind can ensure a woman's constancy. With a tender conscience it may, perhaps, bind her to professions which circumstances ought to over-rule; and thus, at the
very moment, probably, that she finds she might be able to attach herself to another, her chains are fast linked together by professions, of which time has shewn her the folly, as well as the error."

"True, true," exclaimed Henry. "I am, indeed, a selfish fellow. I will go over to Pemberton Castle. I will speak to my uncle. I will once more demand Agnes in marriage, and if again denied, I will ask for a parting interview with my beloved, and I will then relieve her from her promises, and profess my own undying love and constancy."

"I commend your intention of again seeing Lord Moreton," said Mrs. Melbourne, "but would it not make Lady Agnes the subject of unpleasant observation were you to seek her father at Pemberton Castle?"

"Right, always right, dear friend. What then shall I do?" demanded Henry. "I advise you to write to your uncle
at once," replied Mrs. Melbourne, "and ask him if he will not come to the Vicarage, as you most particularly want his advice and sympathy."

Henry hesitated not. He hastened home, and dispatched his note to the Castle. It was as follows:—

"My dear Uncle,—I could not speak to you last evening, and I think it wiser not to seek you to-day at Lord Heathdown's. Will you favor me with a call? I want your advice in a matter of delicacy and importance. Doubtless you will understand me.

"Affectionately yours,

"HENRY CLIVE."

In the course of an hour the following answer was returned:—

"Dear Henry,—We are off in five minutes. Business of consequence calls me home, and Lady Moreton and Agnes cannot be persuaded to remain another day without me. Leslie stays at the Castle till the 5th. From what I have
heard since I came here, I guess your business with me. I have latterly thought this attachment of yours a foolish thing, and I meant to have advised you to forget Agnes. I understand, however, that such advice is not necessary. I see no reason on earth why you should not, on the present occasion, please yourself. Be assured we shall all rejoice in your happiness, and Agnes bids me say that no feelings of delicacy towards her can now possibly interfere with it. So consider yourself quite at liberty to follow the bent of your inclinations. Carriage at the door.

"Yours faithfully,

"Moreton."

Henry Clive read over and over again this laconic and inexplicable note from his uncle. He could not fathom its meaning. He sought Mrs. Melbourne, but she was gone just half an hour before to Hereford, with Mrs. Egerton, and her maid did not expect her at home till the
evening, as she had promised to dine at the Hall. Henry looked so miserable and so disappointed, that the good Letty suggested to him to meet Mrs. Melbourne at Mrs. Egerton's, where she would be about four o'clock.

Henry turned away from the cottage and walked home, quite unable to decide upon what to do, in as much as he was completely puzzled with Lord Moreton's letter. The more he thought about it, the less he could comprehend it; and at last he determined to puzzle his brain no longer, but try and divert his mind until he could see Mrs. Melbourne; she, perhaps, might be able to enlighten him through Miss Murray, who, evidently, from her note, knew more than she would tell him as to the reason of his cousin's non-fulfilment of her promise.

Clive now ordered out his riding horse, and, careless of the way he took, he found himself on the point of meeting a party of gay equestrians who were
laughing and talking at the very top of their voices. Henry, as he supposed, had just time, unobserved, to turn his horse's head on the way he had come, and was setting off on a brisk trot when Frank Pemberton galloped up and hailed him.

"Mr. Clive, halloo, Mr. Clive, you are riding away from friends. Here is Lady Aston, and Lord Leslie, and Miss Murray most anxious to see you." Henry was obliged to hear; and once again turning his handsome chesnut, he shook hands with Frank, and they joined the party.

It was now Henry's object to speak to Helen, if possible, on the subject occupying his heart, but, of that, there seemed little chance. She was closely attended by her faithful Esquire, Lewis Pemberton, and Lord Leslie rode on the other side of her. However, when Clive joined the party, his lordship, in a few minutes, lagged behind, dismounted, and
called one of the grooms in attendance. A stone, in the shoe of his charger, he believed.

The whole party halted, not knowing why Lord Leslie was off his horse. Frank rode back to him, enquiring what was amiss. No stone was to be seen, and Lord Leslie again mounting they trotted after the rest who were proceeding at a slow pace.

Clive had continued to occupy Leslie's place by Miss Murray, little guessing that his lordship had considerately given him the opportunity of doing so; still, however, Henry was not much nearer his wishes, for Lewis Pemberton kept Helen in conversation.

Lady Aston, who was a beautiful horsewoman, now proposed a gallop, and away flew the party over the green sward in the park which they had just entered. All conversation was now at an end, and the object of each one seemed to be to outstrip the other in
the race, and first reach the goal—the stately portico of the castle.

Lord and Lady Heathdown were on the massive flight of steps, somewhat anxiously watching the equestrians.

"I wish," remarked her ladyship, "Emily would not ride at that furious pace. It is very bad for her. It always gives her a pain in her side."

"There is no controlling her on that subject, Louisa," said Lord Heathdown. "How much she is improved in health since she came to us. Even Aston observed it on his arrival yesterday."

"I hope he will take more care of her," said Lady Heathdown.

"Oh, she will do now, and be quite ready for a London season next year," observed his lordship.

"Emily wants to have Helen Murray with her," said Lady Heathdown. "She is wonderfully struck with her."

"And so is another person, I think,
Louisa," said his lordship. "That would be a splendid match for Helen."

"Whom do you mean, Charles?" asked her ladyship. "Not Mr. Clive."

"Oh, no," said Lord Heathdown, "I dare say Clive admires her, as every one must, but I mean his cousin, Lord Leslie."

"Oh, Lord Leslie, really," remarked her ladyship. "I have not observed any particular attention."

"Nor I," said Lord Heathdown, beyond the attention of the eyes." His are constantly upon Helen Murray, and I am much mistaken if he is not fast falling in love with that interesting girl."

"I hope not, I am sure," said Lady Heathdown.

"Why so, Louisa?" asked her husband. "Lord Leslie has every thing to make him a most desirable partner. Birth, rank, fortune, a fine person, a most intelligent, nay, intellectual countenance, with a cultivated mind and an under-
standing to comprehend any subject; a distinguished officer, too, fancy, a Colonel at nine and twenty."

"Accident gave him his rank in the army," said Lady Heathdown, evidently not pleased with the idea of Lord Leslie being in love with her favorite Helen.

"Yes," continued his lordship, "his regiment was dreadfully cut up in our Indian war; but his bravery, without doubt, helped to secure us more than one victory, and he has nobly earned his honors."

"He is too old for Helen," sighed Lady Heathdown.

"Not a day," replied her husband, "I think eighteen requires nine and twenty to keep the equilibrium of prudence and judgment. Don't take notice to any one, Louisa, of what I have said. I may be mistaken, you know."

"I hope you are, Charles," observed her ladyship. "Why the madcaps are out of sight again."
"Here they come," exclaimed Lord Heathdown.

"Surely there is some accident," said his wife. "Is not that a led horse, Charles?"

"I think so," replied his lordship, "but here is Frank who will tell us what it means."

Frank Pemberton, pale and agitated, dismounted. "Will you order out the carriage, sir," said he.

"Good god! Frank, what is the accident?" asked Lady Heathdown.

"Not a serious one, I hope, mother," replied Frank. "Miss Murray has had a fall."

"Poor Helen, poor child," said Lady Heathdown. "I will go in the carriage with you, Charles." Tell us how it happened, Frank.

"Miss Murray's horse was startled by a stag, which suddenly rose from his lair in her path. The animal plunged terribly with her, but she kept her seat
beautifully for a few minutes, Lord Leslie says, but a tremendous bound made by the frightened beast threw her at last over his head."

"Alas, my poor Helen," said Lady Heathdown. "How long they are with the carriage. I suppose she is stunned with the fall, Frank?"

"No bones broken I hope," said Lord Heathdown.

"I think not, father," answered Frank. "I left Miss Murray still lying on the grass. She had not spoken. My sister and Lord Leslie were supporting her. The doctor will be here presently. I dispatched a groom for him instantly."

"That's right," said Lord Heathdown, "and here is the carriage." They got in and quickly arrived at the scene of the accident.

Helen had greatly recovered, and she was now able to speak. She had not attempted to stand, as she felt faint and sick, and Mr. Clive was supporting her,
for Lady Aston's alarm had quite incapacitated her after the first five minutes, and Lord Leslie had resigned his post to his cousin.

Clive had not been present at the accident, as he was riding in advance with Ernest Pemberton. When he heard of it he was greatly shocked, and when he saw poor Helen, pale and insensible in the arms of Lord Leslie, he thought of Mrs. Melbourne, and his countenance portrayed real anguish of soul.

He approached Lord Leslie. “Tell me, Clarence,” said he to his cousin, “tell me—is she much hurt?”

“God only knows,” replied his lordship.”

“Water, is there no water within reach?” demanded Clive. “She has fainted, my lord.”

Henry took Helen's hand, which was even cold through her glove. He tore it off, he unfastened her hat. “Do not raise the head, Lord Leslie. There,
there," said Clive, as he knelt on the other side of Helen, and taking her from the supporting arm of Leslie, laid her gently on the soft turf. "She is more likely to recover so."

At this moment Lewis Pemberton arrived with water from the nearest lodge. Clive bathed her temples, her hands; he moistened her closed lips, he called her by name. "Miss Murray, Helen, are you better—tell me—speak to me—are you much hurt?"

Helen at last opened her eyes, but at least a quarter of an hour elapsed before she could speak, and it was only just as the carriage arrived that Clive had dared to raise her from the ground, and he was supporting her.

Lady Aston had been weeping, and her brother Ernest was trying to soothe her, assuring her that Miss Murray had only fainted, but the tender Emily wept on, and declared she had killed her by persuading her to ride one of her gayest
horses. Ernest had led his sister to some distance, for he really feared the accident was serious, and he saw she was utterly incapable of rendering assistance. She was little less pale than Helen, but when she heard that Miss Murray had spoken, she flew to her side and covered her with kisses, and declared Blanche should be shot, and she would never, never ride her again.

Lord Leslie had remounted his horse as soon as he saw he could be of no further use, and only awaited the arrival of the carriage, when he rode slowly to the Castle, not in a mood to join the rest of the party, or at all inclined to interfere with the prior claims of another in devotion to the fair sufferer. He just remarked to Lord Heathdown, as he stepped out of his carriage, that Miss Murray's accident was trifling, and had produced a fainting fit.

Leslie arrived at the Castle just in time to dismount and reach his own
room when the carriage drove up. Some feeling or other induced him to stand at his open window, which over looked the front entrance. Was it curiosity in Lord Leslie? Was it anxiety for Helen Murray? Was it jealousy? Whatever was the exciting motive, there he stood and watched—yes, anxiously watched the carriage till the steps were put up, the door was closed, and it was driven round to the stable yard.

And was Leslie's curiosity gratified, or his anxiety relieved, or his jealousy appeased?

Lady Heathdown had first left the carriage; then Lady Aston, and Helen, pale as death, had slowly followed them. Very satisfactory so far. Still the steps remained down, and there was a movement inside the carriage. Curiosity was now at its height. Lord Heathdown appeared, and jealousy was put to sleep for a time. Lord Leslie now closed his window and thought how chilly it
had become. He rang his bell, and when his valet appeared he desired him to enquire, with his compliments, how Miss Murray now was. He impatiently awaited the answer, for her slow step and pallid cheek in descending from the carriage, had not escaped him, and his anxiety on her account was even more than the occasion seemed to require. Presently the answer returned was that Miss Murray was lying down, but that Lady Heathdown hoped she had received no serious hurt. And now Lord Leslie occupied himself as he best could till the hour of dinner.
CHAPTER IX.

Lord Leslie was one of the first in the drawing room. Lord Heathdown in reply to his particular inquiries after Helen, assured him that the medical man who had just left her apprehended no ill consequences from the fall. He had advised Miss Murray not to dine down stairs, but she would be able to appear in the evening.

A very large party assembled for dinner, and again Lord Leslie was told
to take out Lucy Colville. She had not been of the riding party, having a slight cold, but she had heard all the interesting particulars attending it from Frank Pemberton.

"Poor Mr. Clive," observed Lucy. "It was very distressing for him. I understand he showed great presence of mind, though——"

Leslie thought Miss Colville had never looked less pretty, and he said, in a tone of pique, "I don't know in what Mr. Clive particularly displayed his presence of mind."

"Oh, Frank told me," said Lucy, "that no one thought of water until Mr. Clive arrived, and that Miss Murray would perhaps have died in your arms, my lord, if Mr. Clive had not insisted upon your laying her on the ground."

Lord Leslie bit his lip in anger. He was silent, for he felt he could not speak calmly, and his dislike to his cousin increased every minute.
The accident of the morning furnished a very general topic of conversation at the dinner table.

Sir James Aston wished he had been present, as he felt sure the animal Miss Murray rode might have been managed by any one near to her at the time.

"Impossible, Sir James," said Lewis. "I was close to Miss Murray, and so were you, Lord Leslie. Did you ever see a more ill-tempered beast?"

"Never," said his lordship. "I hope, Sir James, you will part with it, or, at least, that you will never allow a lady to mount it again."

"Oh, Emily can manage it well," replied he. "But then, she is the best horsewoman in England. It would not have thrown her if twenty stags had started up in her path."

"Perhaps not," said Lord Heathdown. "Miss Murray rides very well, but she is less used to it than Emily. I am glad, however, that it has only been a fright,
and that Helen is really none the worse.”

A note was at that moment handed to Lord Heathdown. He read it. “From Clive,” he said to Mrs. Colville, who sat near to him. “Poor Mrs. Melbourne is very anxious about her niece, and Clive will be here presently to make personal inquiries after her.”

This did not escape Lord Leslie, nor yet what followed from Miss Colville.

“I suppose,” said she, “it is quite true, Lord Heathdown, that Miss Murray is engaged to Mr. Clive?”

“Indeed,” said his lordship, “I think not. I have never heard such a thing mentioned, and I feel sure if it were so that Helen would have told us, for she well knows how much we are interested in her.”

Mrs. Colville remarked that, perhaps, it was only the gossip of the day.

“Indeed I am sure so,” said Lord Heathdown.
"Nevertheless," observed Miss Colville in a low tone to Lord Leslie, "I believe it. But what says your lordship? you ought to know, for I think Mr. Clive is a cousin of yours."

"I am not honored with his confidence, Miss Colville," replied Leslie, "but that he admires Miss Murray there can be no question; and in that he is not singular."

"She is very handsome, certainly," said Lucy, in her usual tone of voice.

"And she knows it too—don't she, Miss Colville?" said Mrs. Brown, who sat just opposite, in one of her loudest whispers. "She is a terrible flirt too, as Jack can attest. Not that he cares for her. I have cautioned Clive as regards her. She will amuse herself with him until some one of higher rank appears. I advise you to beware, my lord." And Mrs. Brown nodded at Lord Leslie, and smiled to the whole extent of her mouth, and looked as bewitching as she knew how.
Lord Leslie made no reply. He wondered who this vulgar over-dressed person could be, and how she had contrived to get into good society. Nevertheless, what she had said did not fail to make an impression upon him, and he determined to think no more of Helen; for, if she were even as charming and as excellent as he thought her beautiful, he had little doubt but that she was attached to Clive—nay, engaged to him in spite of Lord Heathdown's assertion to the contrary; for, had he not heard enough the evening before to make him think so, and had he not seen enough in the agitation and distress of Henry that morning, to convince him that Helen was beloved, if not affianced? And so Leslie had told his sister, and therefore it was that Lady Agnes was gone, for she could not sufficiently have commanded herself to meet with the indifference he deserved, the man who had so miserably deceived her. Clive was
either false to her or to Miss Murray, for Agnes could not doubt her brother, and he had positively assured her that he had overheard most unintentionally, words both from Clive and Helen which could bear but one interpretation, and they were mingled with pity for her.

Poor Agnes! You might have borne your lover's desertion, but his pity you disdained, and your pride came to your assistance. She did not to her brother confess how much she felt, nor breathe a word of the love that Henry had professed for her that very evening. She kept her sorrow, her bitter mortification to herself; and when on the next morning her father announced the necessity of his return home, she begged to accompany him and Lady Moreton, though the Heathdowns were urgent in their request that she would remain at the Castle till the 5th, as Lord Leslie had promised to do. And when Helen took an opportunity on that morning of
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saying, “May I venture to ask you, dear Lady Agnes, for a message for Mr. Clive, for he will be so dreadfully disappointed not to see you at the Vicarage.”

Her ladyship merely replied, “I have no message for Mr. Clive, Miss Murray.”

“I am very sorry,” said Helen.

“Is it possible,” exclaimed Agnes, “that you can act so well. How I pity Clive.”

“I do not understand you, Lady Agnes,” said Helen, colouring deeply.

“Promise me one thing, Miss Murray,” demanded the agitated Lady Agnes—“promise me that you will not tell Clive what has now passed between us. Will you promise me?”

“I will,” said Helen, “but what then am I to say, for I know Mr. Clive expects you, and I know what he will feel.”

“Oh, Miss Murray,” said Agnes, “try not to deceive me—and you may tell Henry I could not keep my engagement, and that——”

H 3
Lady Moreton called her daughter, and a hasty and somewhat formal good bye was all that followed this, to Helen, mysterious *tete a tete*.

And so matters stood—and thus were those the most nearly concerned, made very wretched by the misconstruction of a few words, uttered by Clive and Helen, and overheard by Leslie, which, if rightly understood, would only have born out the sincere professions of the speakers.

When Lady Heathdown and her lady guests withdrew to her drawing rooms, Helen Murray was there, looking pale, for her, but a casual observer would not have noticed it.

Mr. Clive was soon afterwards announced, and he seated himself by Helen in order to be assured of her recovery, as he had come there that evening expressly to satisfy her anxious and affectionate aunt, Mrs. Melbourne.

Helen told him she was quite well,
and then it was that Henry entered on the subject of her letter, but nothing could he extract from her, for Helen remembered her promise. When the gentlemen appeared from the dining room, all eagerly sought Miss Murray and congratulated her on her safety and unimpaired good looks.

Clive did not relinquish his seat by her side, and no wonder that many that evening decided the world was for once right, and that Miss Murray might be if she chose, the mistress of Mayfield Vicarage. Even Lord Heathdown said to his wife when their guests had retired, and they found themselves alone,

"Louisa, I begin to think Mrs. Colville is right."

"About what?" was the laconic question of Lady Heathdown.

"That Helen will be the Honourable Mrs. Clive," said his lordship.

"Nonsense, Charles," exclaimed Lady
Heathdown, "that is still more absurd than your other match for our little girl. A clergyman would not suit her. We shall not lose Helen in that way."
And her small ladyship trotted off, quite satisfied that her husband knew nothing at all about the future as regarded Miss Murray.

Lord Leslie had retired to his room early, little supposing that Clive was incessantly talking of Lady Agnes to Helen, and still less did he think that Helen was beginning to feel an interest in himself, for his fine eyes had been ever upon her, and they seemed to attract her own, whether she would or not.

Once again the mansion was quiet, and the solemn hour of midnight tolled unheard by many of the guests who were then staying at Pemberton Castle.
"How extremely dull the dinner parties are at Pemberton Castle, don't you think so?" said Mrs. Brown to Mrs. Young, who was calling upon her.

"No, I don't think them dull," was the reply, "but I think them very fatiguing from the length of time one sits at the dinner table."

"Yes," continued Mrs. Brown, "and no recompense, for the cooking is miserable. I never get anything I can
eat; no rare French dishes, nothing but heavy seasoned *decided* flavoured English ragouts and disgusting joints. Good heavens! how horrible the soup was I got, and the fish sauce—execrable."

"The chickens were very tender, and jellies very clear," observed Mrs. Young.

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Brown, "they did not give us old hens, or muddy jelly, to be sure; but I declare I would rather have a curry of our oldest cock, concocted by my cook, than any new born chicken dressed at Pemberton castle. And, as for jelly, one never sees it now, excepting there and in a pastrycook's shop window."

"Oh, you are so very particular, Mrs. Brown," said Mrs. Young. "As for ourselves, we live plainly on Arthur's account, he is so bilious that we never have anything that can disagree with him, for he cannot resist, and I am obliged to watch him when we dine out, just like a child. Yesterday he ate
cream cheese just after an unwholesome sweet dish, and he drank champagne, too. Consequently he has a head ache to day, and feels low and nervous; so I would not let him move out, or he would have called here with me."

Mr. John Brown and Henrietta at that moment returned from their ride, and bouncing into the library, almost upset the tottering Mrs. Young, whose appearance did not at all herald her name.

"What a row, Jack," exclaimed his mother. "Where have you been?"

"To ask after Miss Murray," said Jack. "Henrietta wished to have another look at that handsome soldier Lord she sat next to at the dinner last night."

"For shame, Jack," exclaimed his sister. "You know you wanted to see Helen Murray."

"Well, suppose I did," said Jack, with his peculiar smile, unlike any one else's, and indiscrribably ugly, as he lost his eyes completely, and frightfully displayed
his always projecting teeth. "Suppose I did, I am not ashamed to own it."

"And how is Miss Murray?" asked Mrs. Young. "Arthur wanted to ride to Pemberton Castle this morning to enquire after her, but I would not let him, as I knew the exercise would increase his head ache."

"Did you see Lord Leslie?" eagerly asked Mrs. Brown.

"Yes, mamma," said Henrietta, "for a few minutes only."

"Precious minutes, were they not, Hetty?" asked Jack, laughing, "and good use you made of them." Henrietta looked at her brother, as much as to say, remember Mrs. Young is here.

That lady now took her leave, saying, she must go and see that Arthur had his broth, for she should not dare to let him eat solids to day.

"But you did not tell me, Mr. John Brown, how you found Miss Murray. Arthur will want to know, for he is
wonderfully fond of that girl, and never thinks he can pay her attention enough."

"I should be jealous, if I were you, Mrs. Young," said the mischievous Hetty.

"Oh, no, Miss Henrietta, I am happy," and all the time Mrs. Young looked the picture of misery, "quite happy in dear Arthur's affections. He knows he can do nothing without me. He couldn't get on a day. He evidently doats on me. I have no feelings of the sort—indeed I could not have, I could not be jealous. Arthur is so helpless in every thing. He would die if any thing happened to me, poor fellow. He is often low and nervous, but I rouse him, don't let him go out; diet him; and it is wonderful how he gets round again. But you have not yet told me how Miss Murray is."

"Oh, she looked charmingly this morning," said Jack.
“She was better dressed than usual,” observed Hetty.

“Made up for conquest, doubtless,” said Mrs. Brown.

“And I will ensure her the victory, mother, any how,” exclaimed Jack.

“Bless me, boy, are you gone mad,” said Mrs. Brown. “Don’t hurt me so,” for Jack had laid his hand, with a pinching pressure, on his mamma’s well covered arm.

“Helen was particularly amiable to day, mamma, and did’nt snub Jack, that made her so charming,” said Henrietta.

Mrs. Young laughed and displayed her fine set of teeth, and when she was gone Jack declared he would run after her and enquire who made them, for they were a masterpiece of workmanship.

Mrs. Brown now asked Henrietta about her morning’s visit.

“Nothing worth relating,” said her daughter. “A room full of well-dressed
ladies; Lady Heathdown, for a wonder, amongst them. Lady Aston looked lovely, and was singing divinely when we entered. I wish she would notice us in London."

"Well, Hetty, not impossible next season. I am working my way to it," said the vulgar diplomatist. "Are the Colvilles still there?" continued Mrs. Brown.

"Yes," said Jack," Mrs. Colville in all her marble beauty, and Lucy playing the agreeable to Lord Leslie. She grows very plain and old."

"Grapes are sour, Jack, I fear," said his mother. "Nevertheless, you may have Miss Colville if you like. Mind what I say; Lord Leslie won't interfere with your hopes in that quarter, and Lucy is playing a losing game."

"I am sure his lordship was very attentive to her, mamma, last night," remarked Hetty.

"Not at all, child," said her mother.
"The mere common-place of the table. I watched his lordship, and if you, Hetty, had exerted yourself as you know how, Lord Leslie would have been half won by this time. I had no patience to see you."

"He talked a great deal to me for the first half hour, mamma," said Henrietta. "It was after your speech, rather ill-timed, I thought, that he became silent and proud."

"What was it that mamma said," asked Jack, "which spoiled your sport, Hetty?"

"Oh," replied his sister, "it was when Sir James Aston was saying that the accident would not have happened if Lady Aston had been the rider. Mamma looked at me, and told Sir James that her daughter Hetty never had a fall in her life, though she had ridden every hunter in the country one time or another, and would leap any fence. I saw at the time I had lost ground with
PROFESSIONS.

Lord Leslie. He evidently don't like any thing at all masculine in women. I tried to counteract your ill-timed remark, mother, but I didn't succeed last night."

"Well, Hetty, I don't care a fig for this _dilletanti_ nobleman," said Mrs. Brown. "He is no such great catch after all—a lame leg, and a sun-burnt complexion, and the Lord knows what age, besides he may have a hundred wounds for what we know."

"I think I may throw back your own words to you, mother," said Jack. "Grapes are sour."

"Saucy fellow," said his mother, "but I forgive you, my boy, so that you will not demean yourself in marriage."

"Never fear, mamma," said John Brown. "At all events I will take good care I am never refused. The girl I profess love to shall marry me."

"Most likely, I think," said Mrs. Brown; "for I know not the girl who would refuse such a tall, stout, and hand-
some young fellow, with money too, and more than all—a *gentleman*. Yes, I have managed to secure that, Jack. How I fought against your going into the office. I said to your father, give my eldest son a good education, make a gentleman of him by sending him to Eton and Oxford, and then I shall be proud of him. Put Augustus into that odious office, if it must be kept on. So Jack, you owe me an immensity of gratitude."

"And in what shape, mother, must I give it you?" asked Jack.

"A high-bred daughter-in-law. It is all I require for the years of anxiety you have caused me," sighed Mrs. Brown; "for anxiety enough I have had about you. I always feared your idleness might lead to disgrace in preventing you passing your examinations. Those, however, you have got over. Then I never knew what it was to have a spare sovereign in my purse, for you were certainly extravagant."
"Well, well, mother," exclaimed Jack, "I never doubted, I never could doubt your love and goodness to me; and I will hope to please you some of these days when I take a wife. But I am in no hurry to turn Benedict—is that the man in Shakespear that is always quoted on such occasions, Hetty?"

"I don't know," said his sister. "Where's Matilda, mamma?"

"That I can't tell you," said Mrs. Brown. "But who have we here?" for carriage wheels were heard approaching. "Trevor, as I live." And Mrs. Brown ran to a pier glass, arranged her little cap, smoothed her hair, and looked charmingly pleased and excited.

Hetty made her escape by a side door, and Jack passed through the hall as Sir Trevor Dolman entered, merely nodding a good day.
CHAPTER XI.

The Baronet came in holiday humour; and he finally fixed with Mrs. Brown to issue invitations for his ball at Deerfold that day three weeks. On this morning Mrs. Brown’s spirits were almost too excited, even for her admirer Sir Trevor; but as his vanity was gratified by her evident delight in his attentions to her, he excused every thing, and he began to think life was not worth having without the society of a lively loving woman.
He remained an hour with Mrs. Brown, and on leaving her, he declared if she had a daughter to compare with her, she should be Lady Dolman to-morrow.

When the Baronet was gone, Mrs. Brown exclaimed, when she was alone, "Heavens, what a dull man Sir Trevor is. I thought he would never go." Her vanity, however, was as great as the Baronet's, and he gratified it to her heart's content by a devoted attention to her, and an expressed admiration of her on all occasions, even when younger and prettier women were present, who were quite ready to listen to the dull but rich Sir Trevor.

Neither Mrs. Brown nor her admirer had a heart. They were made up of folly and pride. She shone conspicuous as the votary of the one, and he bore "no rival near the throne" as the monarch of the other. If they overstepped the bounds of propriety, which they had been suspected of doing, heart
had no part in it. It was vanity. They were living examples of that sin, carried to excess.

Mrs. Brown amused herself that evening by writing to her dressmaker in Paris for the costume she meant to appear in at Sir Trevor's ball, which she had proposed should be a fancy one; and the Baronet's humour that morning being bent on acceding to every wish of Mrs. Brown, a fancy ball it was to be.

The Miss Browns declared they could not afford new dresses; but so pleased was their mamma at her conquest of the Baronet, that she promised them, provided they would appear in the characters she should choose for them, to give each a proper dress for the occasion. They readily assented, for the Miss Browns were very short of money. Their last quarter's allowance was gone, and numerous bills were owing—so Mrs. Brown added this to her own.
Mr. Hertford dined at the Knoll that evening, and was very cheerful and agreeable. He and Mr. Brown had some serious conversation when they were alone, on family concerns. Mr. Brown complained of the idleness of his eldest son, and the money he squandered; and he asked Mr. Hertford’s assistance to prevail on his wife to consent that Jack should even at the last hour do something.

"The office is out of the question now," said Brown. "But there is the Church and the Bar."

"I quite agree with you, John," said Hertford, "that your son, for his own happiness and respectability, ought to do something, but I fear the time is past for you to insist upon it. It always appears—it always has appeared to me, that you have not sufficiently exerted your authority, John, in your own family."

"Very true, James," said Brown.
"When first I married Jane, I was quite tied down to my desk; and she, I found, had ways of her own, and amusements too, that were not quite to my liking or taste. I did, in those early days of wedlock, make an attempt or two to control her, but I found it would destroy all our domestic peace and comfort if I persevered; for Jane had been a spoiled child from her birth, and a doating grandfather had completed in her what was begun by indulgent parents. Engaged all day in my office, I used to return home weary, and often spiritless, and that was not the hour or time to find fault with my pretty young wife, who always received me with a smile, and was always gay and well dressed; and above all had on every occasion an excellent dinner set before me. I had married her from sheer love, as you know, James; and you also know she had a good fortune. I believe, much as Jane liked me, she fancied she did me
an honor by becoming my wife; but that was an allowable and harmless vanity, and I loved her not the less for it; especially as I saw how very attractive she was to most men of my acquaintance, whether old or young. My vanity now was pleased, and I took my wife everywhere, and I encouraged her taste for dress, thinking my money well bestowed on one who did so much credit to my choice. By degrees we increased the number of our acquaintance, and by the cleverness and tact of Jane, we got rid of some of our vulgar friends, and visited in a higher circle. My wife brought me a numerous family of handsome children. Some died in their infancy, and the four who have grown up are, I think, deserving our love, and likely to reward us for our care. Jane has ever been the best of mothers. In their infancy she provided them with watchful, careful nurses, and when older, secured them accomplished clever gover-
nesses. Now that they are out in the world she takes them every where, and spares neither time nor trouble in setting them off to the best advantage. I am aware, Hertford, that Jane is peculiar in her manner—in her actions, perhaps; but so long an experience have I had of her kind heart and honesty of purpose, that I am now scarcely aware that she is not exactly like all other good wives and mothers that I meet. And, in spite of her flirtations, without which Jane could not exist, I am sure she loves me, as I do her, with truth and warm affection. I have but one trouble," added Brown, "this eldest boy."

Hertford had sat perfectly silent listening to this family history, so truly related by his friend Brown. He sighed at its conclusion, and said, "You and I, John, have been friends now for many years; and though we have occasionally differed in opinion, and I have sometimes thought you abrupt and churlish,
and you have denounced me as the worst tempered man in England—as hypocondriac, disappointed, proud, and I know not what besides; we are, to this hour, the same staunch friends as ever. Your wife is all that you have so feelingly described her to be. Her amiable qualities are her own; her faults are those of education and over indulgence. I often have wished that you had controlled her in some degree, because I think she makes herself enemies by her peculiarities, and she has abilities to be any thing. However, she gets through life as well as most women, and enjoys it more than many. I could have married just such a woman, but with me she would not have been happy, for I should have controlled her, or at least have tried to do so, and if I had not succeeded I should have been miserable from the mere fact of being thwarted. And if I had succeeded, she, perhaps, would have been unhappy; for I know
no one so little inclined to bend to the will of another. Your girls, Brown, are indeed dear, loveable, and pretty creatures, and my affection for them falls little short of your own. Your boys are not to be complained of. Jack is spoiled by his mother, and I think you must make up your mind to allow him to be an idle fellow. He has, happily, shewn no inclination to be vicious, and with the allowance you can afford to give him, he may manage to live like a gentleman; having your house and table always open to him. If he marry, you must settle him down as a quiet country squire. That too, you can afford to do, even if the girl have no fortune.”

“I hope,” interrupted Brown, “that Jack is not disposed to matrimony at present. I am rather afraid he likes Miss Murray.”

“Well, and if it be so,” asked Hertford, “what possible objection can you have?”

“None to the girl herself,” said Brown.
"But I think Jack ought to secure fortune with his wife, especially as he will not choose a profession. It is every man's duty to make money somehow."

"Take my advice, John," said Hertford. "If Jack likes Helen Murray, and she will have him——"

"Will have him!" exclaimed Brown. "That can't admit of a doubt."

"I differ with you there, John," said his friend.

"Why, Helen Murray, to my certain knowledge," said Brown, "has not two hundred a year, and half of it she gives to her aunt, who, you know, is sadly reduced in her circumstances since Melbourne's death."

"I am sorry for it," said Hertford. "I think Melbourne showed great want of forethought and consideration not to provide better for his widow. But I never liked that man, whom everybody used to cry up."

"That, perhaps, was the reason, James,"
observed Brown. "I knew Melbourne well, and I had the greatest regard for him. He had much to contend with. He was poor for many years; a trying thing to a man of family and education. When he got the living of Mayfield he was much too conscientious to save. He did all he could as an honest man, he ensured his life, and his wife was quite satisfied with the only provision he could make for her."


"And so gentle, too, with all her high spirit," observed Hertford. "She will doubtless marry again."

"Perhaps so," said Brown, "but we have gone from our subject—Helen Murray—why do you think she would refuse Jack?"

"And why would you wish her to do so?" asked Hertford.
“Simply because she has not money,” said Brown.

“And she would refuse your son,” said Hertford, “simply because she likes some one else better.”

“Indeed, who is that, Hertford?” demanded Brown.

“Mr. Clive, her uncle’s successor,” said James.

“Perhaps you are mistaken there,” said Brown. “I believe Mr. Clive admires her, but as to the rest I think it is merely city gossip, for which Hereford is rather noted. Come, James, fill your glass, and then let us join the ladies.”

Mr. Hertford made himself particularly agreeable that evening. He was the only guest, and there was no one to interfere with the attentions he, on such occasions, usually received from the Miss Browns, who had known and liked him ever since they were children; and whose amiable disposition drew them
towards him with love and gratitude; for he had been in long habits of intimacy with them, and he never missed an occasion of showing them kindness. Mr. Hertford was seen to advantage in the Browns' family circle, and it appeared strange to those who knew his intimacy at the Knoll, and who saw his influence there, that he had not used it in improving those whom he appeared to be so much attached to, and who were, in all respects, so complete a contrast to himself; for he was a man of education, of knowledge, and of taste, and a great stickler for female delicacy and decorum. It was accounted for in different ways by different people. The good-natured part of the world set it down to his inability to control those who had never been taught the meaning of the word. The ill-natured portion of the community, to his blind admiration of the mother in the first instance, and now, to his no less blind affection for her daughters. How-
ever it might have been, Mr. Hertford when he left the Knoll that evening, envied his friend, John Brown, his cheerful, warm-hearted family circle.
CHAPTER XII.

Helen Murray was at home again, and Mrs. Melbourne had much to hear from her. Lady Agnes Scott's conduct was inexplicable both to the aunt and niece; and, as Helen had not been able to throw any light on the subject of Lord Moreton's letter to Clive, he had sought an opportunity of speaking to his cousin, Clarence Leslie, the morning after Helen's accident, and had ridden over to the Castle for that purpose.
Lord Leslie found him seated by Helen at the breakfast table when he entered the dining room, and his lordship was in no mood to be very cordial with him. However, Clive was quite determined not to be baulked in his intention; and, when his cousin, after making a hasty breakfast, was about to leave the room, Henry said,

"Lord Leslie, will you give me ten minutes? I wish to speak to you."

Clarence returned, and Clive left the table. The young men walked into the library together, and Lord Leslie impatiently said, "What is your business, Mr. Clive? be as quick as possible, for I am riding early to Hereford. I promised to be at the deanery by twelve."

"I will not long detain your lordship," replied Clive with hauteur quite equal to Lord Leslie's. "I only wish to ask you, and I hope you will answer me with the truth and candour I know to
be a part of your character, why my uncle wrote thus to me," and Clive gave him Lord Moreton's note which he had received the day before.

Lord Leslie read it, and returning it, said coolly, "No explanation can be necessary here, Clive. Your own good sense ought to tell you that my father knows your present position, and that he rejoices in it."

"Is it really so?" exclaimed Henry, delightedly. "May I, then, Leslie come over to Moreton Court?"

"Whenever it suits you to do so, doubtless," answered his lordship.

"And Lady Moreton," said Henry, "will she——"

"My mother," interrupted Clarence, "will now, I am sure, make no objection to your visits."

Henry was greatly agitated. "You may imagine my present happiness, Leslie," said he, "after years of anxiety and doubt. Will you tell Agnes, from
me, that the past seems but as a frightful dream, and the present is a bright certainty I can scarcely yet realize."

"My sister, Mr. Clive," said Leslie, "will, I am sure, enter into your present happiness, and I beg to congratulate you on an event that seems to ensure it to you for the future."

"Thank you Clarence, thank you," cried Henry, taking his cousin's extended hand, who evidently was in a hurry to end this *tete a tete*, and who now said, "I must wish you good morning, Henry, I am past my time."

"Will you not ride through Mayfield on your return Leslie?" asked Henry.

"Why should I, Clive, when you are here?" said his lordship.

"Oh, I shall be at the Vicarage in an hour's time," said Clive. "Miss Murray is going to arrange a little fete I am giving to my poor school children, and that she will do immediately, and then I will hasten home."
"Not on my account Mr. Clive," said his cousin. "I shall not be able to call on you. Very likely I shall stay luncheon at the Deanery, and perhaps ride with the Colvilles afterwards."

"Oh, indeed," said Henry, "then I must not expect you, and I am sorry so long to have detained you now. When do you leave the Castle?"


Leslie confirmed in his previously formed opinion of the attachment and engagement of Clive to Miss Murray, and Henry full of happy confidence in the future, and doubting not that now his beloved Agnes would soon be his, beyond the power of fate to deprive him of her.

Lord Leslie was not surprised that Clive had conquered his love for Lady
Agnes, which had all along been hopeless; especially as Helen Murray, the handsome, the interesting Helen Murray, was the successor of his sister in Henry's affections. Who, indeed, could withstand the fascinations of that engaging girl, especially if she favored the suit? Not Lord Leslie—for, even knowing, as he believed he did, that she was betrothed to another, he found her irresistible, and he was annoyed and angry to discover that he was not indifferent to one who was almost unknown to him, and to whom he had not spoken a dozen sentences during the four days he had spent under the same roof with her. He also felt this uncontrollable admiration of Helen made him unjust to Clive. He could scarcely be civil to him, not because he had ceased to care for Lady Agnes—that he thought a fortunate circumstance—but because he loved Helen, and was too surely loved in return. It must be remembered that Lady Agnes
Scott had kept her own counsel, and that her brother knew not the interesting conversation that had passed between her and Henry at the dinner table a few evenings before, and therefore he had no reason to think Clive had used his sister ill, and he doubted not, now that Agnes was aware of Henry's engagement to another, that she would soon cease to think of him but as her cousin. Lord Leslie hoped to forget Helen, and he determined to use his best efforts to do so. He had been invited the previous evening by Mrs. Colville to lunch at the deanery the following morning. He went, and Lucy flattered herself all was going on smoothly towards the accomplishment of her wishes.

Lord Leslie was of the riding party, and so was Henrietta Brown. She tried to interest his lordship, and but for his recollection of her vulgar mother, she might have succeeded, for Henrietta was very handsome, and, when she chose, gentle
and feminine. Besides, she was seen to advantage on horseback; and Lord Leslie almost forgave her the display of following hounds and leaping fences, when he saw how gracefully and admirably she managed her spirited steed.

Lord Leslie did not return to the Castle till just before dinner. He seemed to be in high spirits, and Helen told her aunt that there could be no doubt his lordship had a serious penchant for Miss Colville; indeed, Lady Heathdown had told her in confidence that Lord Leslie was attached to Lucy before he went abroad, and that it was very evident neither time nor absence had decreased his admiration of her.

"Certainly, my dear aunt," said Helen, as she was trying to interest and amuse Mrs. Melbourne the morning after her return home, "certainly Lucy Colville will be very fortunate if she ever become Lady Leslie."

"I have always understood," replied
her aunt, "that his lordship is a most captivating person, and so I suppose you found him, Helen."

"Not exactly captivating," replied her niece, "but very, very interesting."

"Has he won your heart, then, Helen, in four days?" asked her aunt.

"No," said Helen, with a sigh, "but if I must be quite sincere, as I have hitherto been with you, my dear aunt, Lord Leslie I do confess has taken my fancy more than any man I have ever seen."

"Then your first danger is incurred, my dear niece," said Mrs. Melbourne, "and beware how you indulge this fancy. It is the certain precursor of love if the opportunity arise."

"In this case," said Helen, with another subdued sigh, "the opportunity is not likely to occur. Very probably I shall never see Lord Leslie again, unless, indeed, he is serious in his attentions to Miss Colville, and as the lover
of another he could not be dangerous to me."

"Don't be too sure of that, Helen," said her aunt. "I have heard girls profess the impossibility of loving unsought, of allowing themselves to become attached to a man who is devoting himself to another; but those very secure young ladies have invariably been the victims of passion, and I wish thus early, my dear child, to put you on your guard with respect to this interesting Lord Leslie."

Helen thanked and kissed her aunt, assuring her that her counsel should not be forgotten.

"We are very likely to know Lord Leslie, I think," said Mrs. Melbourne, "now that Mr. Clive is to be made happy with Lady Agnes."

"True," observed Helen. "I quite forgot that. Oh, my dear aunt, how much you will admire Lady Agnes Scott. She is very beautiful—so fair, with very little colour, only just enough to give her
the appearance of health. Her hair is a lovely shade of light brown, and falls in rich curls over her neck. Her eyes are beyond all description—their soft expression so mingled with intellect. Her mouth speaks volumes without the aid of words, and her other features are all in keeping. Then her figure—Oh, how I wish I were as tall as Lady Agnes. She is quite as slight as I am, but three or four inches taller. And her voice, it always reminded me of yours, dear aunt, and was not the less charming for that.”

“You have painted a very pretty picture, Helen,” said Mrs. Melbourne. “Now sketch me its companion in Lord Leslie. He, too, is handsome, Mr. Clive says.”

“I don’t think so,” said Helen, “not half as handsome, so far as regularity of features go, as Mr. Clive. There is a likeness between the cousins, just enough to announce their relationship. Lord Leslie is very tall. I should think
he is more than six feet. I admire his figure very much. Mr. Clive, you know, is thought to have a good one, but he really looks quite short and stout when standing by his cousin, though Lord Leslie is lame now, and thus loses some of his height. His carriage is very graceful, and quite soldier-like, and it is softened down by the highest breeding. He has a proud expression at times, but generally it is not thus, and then his countenance has all the sweetness and intellect of his sister, though they are not at all alike, excepting in voice. In both that is a great charm."

"Well, Helen," said her aunt, "proceed. I am anxious to have this picture finished."

Helen blushed. "There is little more to add, dear aunt," she said. "Lord Leslie has not one regular feature. His eyes are, I am sure I don't know what colour, as it is next to impossible ever to look at them, for they have the most
earnest, heart searching expression I ever saw, and his lordship has a habit of fixing his gaze, rather unpleasantly, on those he happens to be near. His teeth are exquisitely white, but not even. His nose is slightly aquiline, but not enough so to call it handsome. His mouth is his best feature, I think. It is as expressive and almost as mischievous as your own, Aunt Melbourne. Once or twice I read Lord Leslie’s thoughts, I am sure, from the curl of his lip. He has a fine forehead. His hair is a darker shade than Lady Agnes’, and he is much bronzed by his long Indian campaign.”

“A very fine portrait, indeed, Helen,” said her aunt, “and now does the mind of this young nobleman equal his appearance.”

“That I am no judge of,” replied Helen, “for Lord Leslie scarcely spoke to me.”

“How strange! was it not?” asked her aunt, “staying so many days toge-
ther, and the party in the house not very large.

"I don't know," said Helen. "At the time it had no appearance of strangeness, much less of rudeness; for Lord Leslie omitted no opportunity of shewing me civility, but he never sought me; he did not seem to wish to make my acquaintance. In short, I must even confess," said Helen, with her third sigh, "that his lordship treated me with that perfect indifference which is more decidedly disagreeable than even marked dislike."

"You had no especial introduction, I suppose," said Mrs. Melbourne. "In these days that is never done."

"Yes," said Helen, "I had, and by Lord Leslie's express desire; but I believe it was asked in kindness, not from any wish to know me; for Mr. Clive and I were talking confidentially of his love for his cousin, thinking we were alone, when Lord Leslie started from a sofa,
and not knowing what else to say, and evidently wishing to put us at our ease, he begged Mr. Clive would introduce me to him."

"And what followed?" asked Mrs. Melbourne.

"A most charming quarter of an hour," said Helen—her eyes sparkling, and tears struggling to escape. "Lord Leslie related to me the particulars of the battle of Bhurtpoor."

"Was his lordship engaged in it?" eagerly demanded Mrs. Melbourne.

"Yes," said Helen; "it was his first field, I believe. Was it not strange, dearest aunt, that eight years after the sad event I should meet with the very brave and kind officer whom dear papa mentioned in his last letter to me?"

"And is Lord Leslie that young officer?" asked Mrs. Melbourne.

"Indeed he is, aunt," said Helen. "And if you had heard him praising papa, and how well he explained the
battle field, even making it clear to my comprehension; how he tried to hide
his own bravery and his great kindness and attention to papa, you would have thought him interesting."

"Indeed it would have been a great pleasure to me to have met him," said Mrs. Melbourne; "and I am half sorry I did not go with you to the Castle. But tell me, love, what do you think of the Pembertons? I mean the young men."

"I like them very much," said Helen. "They are so exceedingly amiable, and so particularly attentive to dear Lady Heathdown. Her wishes seem to be their law; and Lord Heathdown, too, at the same time that you cannot but remark the high veneration in which his sons hold him, seems more like their elder brother than their father. He enters into their pursuits, he anticipates their wishes; in short, I am charmed with the whole family."
"I fear, dear Helen, you will find me but a sombre companion after the excitement of the last few days," sighed Mrs. Melbourne.

"Never say so again, my naughty ungrateful aunt," exclaimed Helen, rising from her seat, and throwing her arms around Mrs. Melbourne. "You surely have not now to learn how I love you, how I always wish you could be with me, and that half my pleasure whilst I am away from you is the anticipation of relating to you, on my return, every little incident, every word that I think may interest you."

"Dear child," said her aunt, kissing her affectionately, "how happy your love makes me. I now live only for you, dear Helen."

"For me, then, continue to live, best and dearest of mothers," exclaimed Helen; "for to me you are a mother; at least I have never known the want of one, blessed as I have been with your affection."
Mrs. Melbourne's beautiful countenance, as she turned her lustrous eyes on Helen, struck even her niece, who was so accustomed to it, with admiration; and she smiled with delight as she gazed upon her aunt, and hoped returning health and spirits were yet in store for her.
CHAPTER XIII.

That same morning Mr. Clive called at the cottage. He had previously told Mrs. Melbourne of his conversation with Lord Leslie and the happy result, and he now came to say he should arrange to pay his visit to Moreton Court on the following Monday, as he should not feel quite happy until he had, from Agnes' own lips, the confirmation of their bliss so long delayed, and till now so hopeless.
Mrs. Melbourne did not wonder at Mr. Clive's impatience to see his cousin, and Helen supposed he had written to her.

"By this very post I have announced, in a letter to my uncle," said Clive, "my intention of being his guest on Monday. To Agnes I enclosed a few lines. How proud I shall be, Mrs. Melbourne, to introduce her to you. You, Miss Murray, made an immediate conquest of my cousin."

"I am quite impatient to have her at the Vicarage, Mr. Clive," said Helen. "I never saw so lovely a creature. I have been drawing her picture for my aunt's gratification."

"Though her personal attractions are great," said Clive, "you have yet to learn the still more winning charms of her mind and disposition."

"Indeed, Mr. Clive, I congratulate you on your present happiness," said Mrs. Melbourne. "It seems now secured to you."
"I can scarcely believe in its existence," said Clive. "It is such a contrast to my last two years of misery."

"I hope you will soon bring Lady Agnes to Mayfield," said Helen. "What a charming acquisition she will be. Will she, do you think, ever teach in the school, or visit the cottagers as Aunt Melbourne did? and, as she says, every clergyman's wife ought to do. I can scarcely fancy Lady Agnes Scott liking such occupations."

"Oh, you do not at all know Agnes," said Clive. "You should see her at home in a plain dress, such as you generally wear, Miss Murray, with a cottage straw bonnet like that," pointing to Helen's, which lay on a chair, "and with such sensible boots. Her basket on one arm, containing some little delicacy for a sick cottager, and in the other hand her capacious bag with books or work, or something required at the school. The village of Moreton
is, at least, two miles from the mansion," continued Clive, "and Agnes seldom misses going there some time in every day. If the weather is very bad, she has her pony carriage, but when it is possible she always prefers walking as a less ostentatious way of visiting the poor. Of course, the whole parish belongs to my uncle, but Lady Agnes has gained more influence over the peasantry by her goodness and gentleness towards them, than the right of property could ever acquire. The incumbent of Moreton is a very old man, and a very good one. He is not now able to take much duty, but his very existence is a blessing to the inhabitants. He has an able curate, and though the living has long been intended for me, as my poor mother received this promise from her brother, Lord Moreton, on her death-bed, I shall really be very sorry to take possession of it."

"How happy though, for the poor
parishioners," said Mrs. Melbourne, "that Lady Agnes will still be amongst them."

"Yes," observed Clive, "she, too, has set her heart on this; for such is her interest in them, and attachment to them, that she used to tell me that my promised living of Moreton first made me interesting to her."

"I suppose," asked Mrs. Melbourne, "you will make some alterations at the Vicarage."

"Very few, unless Agnes wish it," said Clive; "and I scarcely think she will, as it is not likely to be her residence long. The rectory at Moreton is not large, perhaps I shall add to it when I come into possession, and I hope to be able to continue here for a time, for believe me, whenever the hour comes for me to leave Mayfield, I shall be really grieved."

"And we shall be quite lost without you, Mr. Clive," said Mrs. Melbourne.
"I wonder who will have dear Mayfield?"

"As it is in the gift of the Lord Chancellor, it will depend upon politics," said Clive. "Fortunately for me I was a Conservative, but I think the next Vicar will be a Whig, from the present aspect of the political world."

"I care not what the politics are at the Vicarage," said Mrs. Melbourne, "provided your successor be a good man and a gentleman."

"Perhaps it won't be of so very much consequence to us, aunt," observed Helen.

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Melbourne.

Helen blushed and was silent.

"What do you mean, Helen?" said her aunt.

"May I interpret Miss Murray's meaning?" asked Clive.

"Pray do," said her aunt, perceiving Helen was busying herself with her
school tickets and the children's prizes, and did not seem inclined to speak.

Clive whispered to Helen, so as to be heard by her aunt. "May I tell Mrs. Melbourne my suspicions, nay, my convictions, Miss Murray?"

"If you like to talk nonsense, pray do, Mr. Clive," said Helen; and she looked rather indignant, if not cross, for as we have before said, Helen Murray was not good tempered. She was very hasty, and she thought, in the present instance, that Mr. Clive was neither intimate enough nor old enough to joke with her.

Mrs. Melbourne was curious, and in a jocose way begged to know what all this meant.

Mr. Clive, perceiving Helen was not pleased, was silent in his turn; and Helen, now really in a pet, with height-ened colour and sparkling eyes said:—

"Mr. Clive choses to joke me, Aunt Melbourne, about Mr. Lewis Pemberton,
the very last person in the world I could marry; and I suppose he thinks it a good joke, for he cannot for a moment believe it is any thing else. I am sorry I made the observation I did," continued Helen, "as I feel obliged now to explain myself to avoid the ridiculous suspicions of Mr. Clive. I meant that perhaps, before Mr. Clive would have to leave Mayfield, we should be living elsewhere."

"Do you then think of giving up this pretty cottage, Mrs. Melbourne?" eagerly asked Clive, forgetting, in his anxiety to know this, that he had offended Miss Murray.

"There is a possibility of our doing so, certainly," said Mrs. Melbourne, "though little probability of it, in my opinion. It depends upon circumstances over which I have no control; in fact, upon the sincerity of professions. But Helen, I wish you would put on your bonnet and go and see old Hannah. She
was much worse yesterday, and was inquiring for you."

"Have you forgiven me my ill-timed and I fear impertinent joke, Miss Murray?" said Clive, in a submissive tone.

Helen's pet was over, and she good-humouredly said, "Oh, yes, Mr. Clive; but don't repeat it, for many reasons. Will you walk with me, or are you remaining with my aunt?"

"I must go and see the schoolmaster," said Clive, "and arrange finally for tomorrow's feasting. I will, if you will allow me, take you to Hannah's door."

As they walked together they met Lewis Pemberton. He was on his way to the cottage with a message from his mother. Helen told him she was going to see a poor dying woman, so he must excuse her absence, but he would find her aunt at home.

"I don't know Mrs. Melbourne," said Lewis; "at least, it is a very long time since I saw her. Cannot you come
with me, Miss Murray? I am sure Mr. Clive will take your place at the old woman's."

"Certainly," said Clive; but observing the beseeching look of Helen not to follow up his offer of going in her stead to old Hannah's, he added, "I forgot though, that I have employment elsewhere. My presence is required at the school. I will, with pleasure, walk with you, Mr. Lewis Pemberton, to Mrs. Melbourne's cottage gate; it is not much out of my way." And he took the arm of Lewis, and before he had time to think of making excuses to defer his call till the morrow, he was half way to the cottage, almost irresistibly dragged there by the energetic Clive; and Helen pursued her quiet walk to old Hannah's, quite reconciled to Mr. Clive for his quick perception of her wishes, and his ready assistance to forward them.

Lewis found Mrs. Melbourne in her garden, and though she had not seen
him for six or seven years, she quite remembered him, as she always had taken a peculiar interest in him on account of his delicate health. Lewis was pleased with Mrs. Melbourne’s ready and warm recognition of him, and so charming a person did he think her, that he was quite surprised to find he had sat an hour with her, and not much regretted the absence of Helen.

Lady Heathdown hoped that Mrs. Melbourne, so she had desired her son to say, would spend some day next week at the Castle; and if she would name it, the carriage should be at the cottage at her own hour.

"Of course," added Lewis, "Miss Murray will come with you."

"That she will, I am sure, Lewis," said Mrs. Melbourne. "She is never so happy as when there."

"That’s right," said Lewis. "She cannot come too often. Do you think she will soon be at home? She stays
an unaccountable time with old Hannah.”

“I dare say she is gone to the school,” said Mrs. Melbourne.

“Why Mr. Clive is there,” remarked Lewis. “Does Miss Murray go there often?”

“Oh, yes, most days when she is at home,” replied her aunt.

“Well, that is very good of her,” said Lewis, “I did not think a girl so fond of dancing would have liked teaching poor little parish boys and girls. But, perhaps, you make Miss Murray go there, Mrs. Melbourne.”

“No, indeed, Mr. Lewis Pemberton, I use no compulsion, I assure you,” said Mrs. Melbourne. “Helen has been in the habit of thinking it her duty to do as much good as she can in her limited sphere of action, and where a girl has not much money to bestow, there is a greater call upon her time; and the talents God has gifted her
with, must all be made the most of, since all will have to be accounted for, Lewis, as you well know, I am sure."

"You talk just like my own dear good mother, Mrs. Melbourne," said Lewis. "She has her school, and her cooking shop, her dispensary and her village wardrobe, and it is quite wonderful how much good she does without any parade. I did not know Helen, Miss Murray I mean, was as good as she is beautiful. I fancied she only liked gaiety, and could not exist without balls."

"From whom then had you Helen's character?" asked Mrs. Melbourne, with some curiosity.

"Oh, it was only what I thought myself," said Lewis.

"And why did you so egregiously under-rate my poor Helen, Mr. Lewis Pemberton?" asked Mrs. Melbourne, not quite pleased with him.

"I did not mean at all to under-rate
Miss Murray," said Lewis, with animation. "I remembered her as a beautiful child, and I found her just as handsome as an introduced young lady. She appeared full of life and fun, she professed herself to be fond of dancing, and seemed to enter with spirit into every kind of mirth. She told me how many balls she had been to since she came out, and how she should like a season in London. She never once spoke to me of schools and clothing clubs, and Sunday classes, and tracts, and the numerous etceteras that the very good young ladies of my acquaintance often favour me with till I am weary of their excellencies, and wish they were still more perfect, and would devote themselves entirely to charities, and not bore me with the sound of their praises. Such are the Miss Thompsons, and the Miss Dicksons, and a few others—girls who dine occasionally at the Castle."

Mrs. Melbourne could not but smile
at the conclusion Lewis had come to as regarded Helen. She said, "you will never hear from Helen's self of her good actions. Display is no part of her character, and though no girl in the world so thoroughly enjoys a ball, or an archery meeting, or indeed, any thing in the shape of mirth, she has never been neglectful of her duties."

"You know she is to go to London next season," said Lewis. "I hope you won't oppose that scheme of mamma's."

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Melbourne. "There is time enough to think about that. Will you tell Lady Heathdown," continued Mrs. Melbourne, as Lewis rose to go, "That we will come to her on Wednesday with great pleasure, and we shall be ready for the carriage at one o'clock."

Lewis now took leave, begging Mrs. Melbourne would tell Miss Murray that he quite approved of her visiting the sick, and teaching poor little girls, but
not just at the time he called at the cottage; and Lewis Pemberton walked home, full of Helen Murray’s beauty and goodness, and quite satisfied that she would, some of these days, listen to his professions of love, and, perhaps, not receive them unkindly.

Thus the most amiable of characters are often blinded by self-love, and lured on to make themselves an unhappiness, which they might have escaped had they possessed a smaller share of that common failing.
CHAPTER XIV.

Lord Moreton had just received his letters as he sat at the breakfast table at Moreton Court. Lady Agnes was there, but her mother had not yet come down stairs. After opening various dispatches, the Earl took up a letter and broke the seal. It was from Clive, and ran thus:—

"My dear Uncle,—I am anxious to find myself at Moreton Court, and I hope to be with you on Monday. Leslie
tells me you will be at home, and he has ensured me a welcome. Will you give the enclosed to Agnes?

"Believe me, affectionately yours,

"HENRY CLIVE."

"Well, Agnes, must we have him?" said her father, throwing Henry's letter across the table to his daughter. "How do you feel on the subject, my dear girl?"

Agnes burst into tears.

"Nay, my child," continued Lord Moreton. "Is it so? then Henry shall not come here, depend upon it. Read what he says to me."

Lady Agnes continued to do so through her tears, and she now put Henry's billet to her into her father's hand. It only contained these few words:—

"Dearest Agnes,—I cannot write my happiness. On Monday we shall meet.

"Yours ever,

"H. Clive."
"Well, love," said her father, after perusing it, "tell me your feelings towards Clive."

"I will, dear papa, give you my full confidence," sobbed out poor Lady Agnes. "It is my only chance of composure. But mamma will be coming. Will you make my excuses to her, dearest father, and let me see you after breakfast in my boudoir."

"Yes, love," said Lord Moreton, "and if Henry Clive has used you ill, I will forget he is the son of my poor dear sister Julia, and turn my back upon him for ever." And he gave his child a hurried kiss as she passed him on leaving the room.

"The living of Moreton must be his," soliloquized the Earl, when left alone. "I promised Julia that on her deathbed. A foolish match she made, truly; a spendthrift lordling with even fewer brains than he had guineas. She dearly paid for her folly, poor thing. Deserted
by the man she had persisted in marrying against the wishes of all her family, she lived to see him a victim to his vices, and his younger children almost destitute. Happily, death released most of them from this world's troubles. I adopted Henry, and prettily he has repaid me, even by destroying the happiness of my sweet Agnes.” And the Earl's serene temper was unusually ruffled. The entrance of Lady Moreton, however, acted like a charm upon her ever considerate lord. He assumed even cheerfulness; for he was the best and kindest of husbands, and his affection for his wife was only equalled by his love for his daughter. He made excuses for Agnes' absence—a head-ache, a sleepless night, owing to over fatigue the day before. Lady Moreton was easily satisfied, and she believed her foolish Agnes would kill herself if she persisted in her attendance at the school, and waited on the sick poor. “I wish, More-
ton,” said her ladyship, “you would speak to Agnes on the subject. She is looking ill; and no wonder, for the impure air of a close room filled with village children must be excessively bad for her; and then we don’t know what diseases she subjects herself to in her daily round of visits to the cottages.”

“True, my love,” replied Lord Moreton; “but I hope Agnes is not much amiss; and, as to depriving her of the every day occupation that has interested her ever since she was ten years old, I think we cannot do that, Catherine. Here is a letter from Leslie,” continued his lordship; “he returns to-day.”

“I am glad of that,” said Lady Moreton. “I wish him to be at home when the Davenants are here.”

“I know you do,” observed Lord Moreton, with a smile. “You think Constance would be a very nice wife for our boy. Don’t you, Lady Moreton?”
"I am sure the connection would be quite unobjectionable," remarked her ladyship; "and that is saying a great deal in these days."

"I agree with you, Catherine," said Lord Moreton; "and Constance herself is a very nice girl, but I doubt whether Clarence will admire her."

"She is not handsome, certainly," replied Lady Moreton; "but sufficiently good looking, and her high birth and breeding will ensure him certain advantages. She has no poor or low connexions. She is clever and very good tempered, and Leslie ought to secure the latter qualification in a wife, for he is somewhat hasty, you know."

"True, love," said his lordship. "Clarence is very impetuous, and his failing is, that he is too apt to act from the impulse of the moment. I advise you, Catherine, not to fix your mind on this match, for I feel sure Leslie will choose for himself, and I do not intend
to thwart him in this matter. We will not mar his happiness, my dear wife." And Lord Moreton sighed, and thought of his poor Agnes.

"You are too indulgent, my lord," exclaimed Lady Moreton. "I believe if you had set your face as determinately as I did against the attachment of Agnes for Henry Clive, our daughter would never have thought of him for a moment. That business, however, is at an end. When is Clive to be married?"

"I don't know, but I suppose soon," replied Lord Moreton.

"We must ask them here, of course," said her ladyship. "Miss Murray appears to be a well-bred girl, considering she is not of a good family. However, Clive will give her the Honourable, so she will pass very well."

"Miss Murray's father," observed Lord Moreton, "was a brave officer whom Leslie knew in India. So he told me the other evening at Pemberton Castle."
Colonel Murray was of the Athol family, so Miss Murray is very well connected, and I certainly never saw a girl I thought quite so pretty, or one I so greatly liked on a short acquaintance."

"I really scarcely spoke to her," said Lady Moreton. "I perceived what a favourite she was with the Heathdowns, and I concluded she was intended for one of the young Pembertons, as I know Lord Heathdown don't care much about rank. He is sadly indifferent on that point, and one meets very strange people at Pemberton Castle, certainly."

"That is quite true, Catherine," said Lord Moreton; "but Heathdown is a kind-hearted hospitable fellow, and besides he has no dislike to be the great man. It is a very harmless taste, and he does the thing better than any one I know; I mean it is less offensive in him than in most people, for his family and fortune entitle him to the distinction he claims."
"I wish Lady Heathdown would dress better," observed Lady Moreton.

"Don't she attend to that?" carelessly asked Lord Moreton.

"Where could your eyes have been not to notice this great defect?" said Lady Moreton.

"I suppose, love, fixed on you;" said Lord Moreton with a smile. "For your toilette is never neglected, certainly."

"No, never," said her ladyship. "I think dress a criterion of good breeding. To understand the happy medium between gorgeous finery and plebean simplicity. To be properly dressed for the occasion, whatever it may be, is the first consideration. The second is to be properly dressed for your station; and the third, which is most difficult, is to be suitably attired for your age."

Lord Moreton had taken up the newspaper, well knowing now that his wife had got upon her two favorite topics, rank and dress, she would harangue for
the next half hour; and, an occasional "yes, love," "certainly," was all that was necessary to satisfy her. When the lazy hour of breakfast was over, Lord Moreton hastened to his daughter's boudoir. He found her composed, but very pale.

Lord Moreton sat down. "Now, tell me, my child," he said, "all and everything that is on your mind as concerns this troublesome Clive."

"I will, papa," said Agnes, "and then I shall be happier. It will be said in a few words. I need not tell you how I loved Henry." And the pale girl trembled. Lord Moreton took her hand and retained it in his. Agnes went on. "I have never deceived you, papa. I have always told you that absence did not diminish my love for Clive, and that I believed time would never alter it. You kindly offered to invite him here, on condition that we only met as relations. I wished him to come, but he, you know, dared not trust himself. We
went to Pemberton Castle. We met, and at the dinner table we found ourselves, quite accidentally, side by side. You had promised me, you will remember, to take me to Henry's new home, Mayfield Vicarage, during our stay at the Heathdown's, and I told him so in answer to his hope that he might see us there. We were, during the few first moments, both greatly agitated, and Leslie, who sat just opposite to us, observed it. He, with his usual consideration, entered into conversation with Henry, and, after thus giving us time to regain our composure, he left us to ourselves. Then it was we talked of the past, the present, and the future. Then it was that Henry spoke to me of his love, and that I professed myself unchanged towards him. "Forgive me, father," said Agnes, as she threw herself upon his shoulder and wept bitterly. "Forgive your child this act of disobedience, she has been sufficiently punished for it. Do you forgive me,
father?” she added, as she raised her head, and looked imploringly at Lord Moreton. His eyes were overflowing, and his tears dropped upon the fair hair of his beautiful and unhappy Agnes. He pressed her to his heart, he kissed her pallid cheek, he told her, as soon as he had the power of speech, that he loved her more than life, and that he forgave her all—everything.

Agnes ceased to weep at this assurance, and presently resumed her seat. “With my father’s love, then, I will still be happy,” she exclaimed. “You shall not any longer have cause to think me a weak fond girl, who nurses her sorrow, and willingly feeds upon it. But hear me to the end, papa. I have little more to say. In two hours after Henry and I had parted at the dinner table, I fully believing in his love and constancy, Leslie told me that he had reason to think that Clive was attached, if not engaged to Miss Murray. I wonder how
I lived after that astounding announcement."

Lord Moreton now rose from his chair. "The villain!" exclaimed he. "My poor, poor child." And he again sat down, and held the cold trembling hand of his daughter in both of his. Agnes struggled with her emotion, and proceeded. "I had just power to beg Clarence would tell me all he knew, and he did so, and in kindness, for he had observed during dinner, that I was much agitated and greatly interested by what Clive was saying, and he feared, alas, too truly, that my affections were still Henry's. Therefore on his discovering, which was quite accidental, Henry's attachment to Miss Murray, he took the first opportunity to put me on my guard." Here Lady Agnes told her father how Lord Leslie had heard Clive wishing he could speak to Helen alone, and how she had immediately suggested the library, and how they had been alone there for
some time. How Clarence had overheard words from both of them that confirmed his suspicions, and that could not, indeed ought not, to leave his sister any longer in doubt of Clive's inconstancy. Lady Agnes then continued. "That night, papa, I gave to consideration, and the result was a determination to keep my bitter sorrow to myself; and the next morning I asked you to take me home with you, and when you gave me Henry's note to read, which you received just before we left Pemberton Castle, my pride assisted me in begging you would tell my cousin that he was quite free, as far as I was concerned, to please himself. I have also reason not to think very favorably of Miss Murray, but I am not certain on this point, therefore I will not prejudice you against her."

"Do you think she knew of your position as regards Clive?" asked Lord Moreton.

"I am almost sure she did," said
Agnes, "but, still, Henry has been so false, so wanting in truth to me, that I will not try to attach blame to one who has, of course, been influenced by him, and who knows nothing but just what he has chosen to tell her. And now, dear papa, what shall you say to Clive?"

"I shall tell him he is a scoundrel," said Lord Moreton, with heightened colour, and in a loud tone.

"Oh, no, papa, for my sake," said Agnes. "Refer not to the past. I wish all to be forgotten."

"Very amiable in you, my child, but very difficult for me to comply with," said her father. "The villain, the coxcomb! What would he have been but for me? Where would he now be if I refused to give him the Rectory of Moreton? Who influenced the government to make him vicar of Mayfield? Much good his honorable connections, and the honorable attached to his name, but, alas, so foreign to his nature; would have
done him, if the Earl of Moreton had not befriended him. And what is the consequence? What is my reward? The unhappiness of my only daughter, my darling Agnes."

And Lord Moreton clenched his hand, and looked in his anger, mingled with anguish of mind, as though he could destroy this son of his adoption, this beloved child of his only sister. Lady Agnes approached her father with timidity. "My dear papa," she said, in her own peculiarly sweet voice, "for my sake be calm, be generous. I will try to forgive Henry, and so must you; and there is no real forgiveness, believe me, without forgetfulness. We are promised forgiveness of sins, and what does that mean, dear father? It means that our sins are to be blotted out, are to be as though they never had existed, are to be forgotten; and on what grounds is this promised us? on what condition? That 'we forgive those who have trespassed
against us.' Forgive them in the same way assuredly, that is, forget the injury, and act towards them as though they had never committed it. Am I not right, papa? And will you not thus forgive Henry Clive?"

"I will try, Agnes, to do so," said Lord Moreton, his passion subdued by the christian charity of his child, so beautifully set forth for his instruction. "I will try, love, and may God enable me so to act."

"True, true, papa," said Agnes, "it is only through God's assistance that we can do right, and if we ask for it believing, we shall have it."

"Bless you, my child," said Lord Moreton, "let me see you happy, Agnes; and my first, my daily, my earnest prayer is answered."

"You shall, papa, be assured," replied Agnes. "There is no uncertainty now to torment me. Clive is about to be another's, indeed he is virtually so now."
I shall have less difficulty than you may perhaps imagine in considering him as the husband of another. He has taught me that lesson by his unparalleled hypocrisy. And now tell me, papa, how you will answer him."

Lord Moreton promised to be entirely guided by Agnes. "What shall I say, love?" demanded her father.

"This, papa," said Agnes. "That your house is full, which will be true, you know, and that when you are more disengaged you will write to him. Add from me nothing, excepting that you gave me his enclosure, or he may possibly imagine you kept it from me; and pray include my name in your general remembrance, for least of all would I have him think I am piqued."

Lord Moreton praised his daughter for her generous spirit, and left her to write to his nephew and to answer his numerous correspondents.
CHAPTER XV.

When Agnes was alone, on bended knees she asked in humble prayer for that assistance which is never denied to the earnest seeker, and she arose strong in faith and resolute in duty.

She occupied herself incessantly, and she felt glad that the house was filling with company that evening, as she must necessarily exert herself to amuse her guests; and she also felt that for the present society was better for her than
solitude, and the excitement of company more likely to divert her thoughts from Clive than her usual way of spending a greater part of each day, namely, amongst his future parishioners, for she was quite sure Moreton Rectory would be Henry's on the death of the excellent Mr. Grant; for her father was too good and forgiving not to continue his kindness to the son of a beloved sister. And Agnes still hoped the time might arrive when she could meet Clive merely as a relation, and forget how unkindly he had behaved to her.

But this was all in the distant future, a future that might not be in store for her. The present was the time for action, and Agnes Scott made good use of it.

Among the guests expected at Moreton Court that day, were Lord Davenant and his sister Constance. Miss Davenant was the great friend of Lady Agnes, and well was she calculated to be so.
pursuits were alike. Their tastes, on most subjects, agreed. They were of the same age, of similar dispositions, and each possessed a sweet temper. But there the likeness ended. In personal appearance nothing could be so different. Constance Davenant was plain; her complexion was almost swarthy, her hair jet black, her nose decidedly turned up; her mouth was wide, but her teeth were white and regular; her eyes were expressive, and had they been dark instead of a light gray, they would have been pronounced fine. Her figure was commanding, and her carriage graceful. She had one peculiarity in diametrical opposition to her friend, her voice was harsh and discordant. Yet, possessing so many personal disadvantages, Constance Davenant was a favourite with all who knew her; and no girl received more attention, if not admiration, wherever she appeared.

Constance had of course known of Agnes' long attachment to Henry Clive,
but had yet to learn the conclusion of what she always considered a most unhappy affair.

Agnes felt sure of her sympathy, and she knew that Constance would be the best possible companion for her then. She had so much kind and tender feeling, and at the same time no ridiculous romance about her. She would divert Agnes' thoughts to subjects which would naturally interest them, and thus prevent her dwelling on the painful and mortifying events of the past. And Lady Agnes Scott rejoiced to think that in a few hours Constance would be with her.

In the mean time she occupied herself in arranging her library, in looking into her portfolio and collecting her sketches and original designs, in order to show them to Constance for the benefit of her corrections, for Miss Davenant was a first-rate artist. She looked over all her shells and fossils,
and prepared a little Indian cabinet for them, as she knew Constance would arrange them for her in a scientific manner. She brought out her hortus siccus, and determined to ask her friend to classify those plants she was doubtful about, for Miss Davenant was also an excellent Botanist.

Before Agnes had half finished all she intended to do, Lord Leslie entered her boudoir.

"Dearest Clarence," exclaimed Agnes, "how glad I am to see you here again. Have you been all this time at Pemberton Castle?"

"No," said Lord Leslie, throwing himself on a couch. "I have spent the last two days with the Colvilles."

"Oh, indeed," said Agnes with a meaning smile, "and how is Lucy, as pretty and charming as ever?"

"I think not," said Leslie. "At least, quite as pretty, and a very nice girl; but she is not good tempered Ag-
nes; and you know I make that a *sine qua non* in my estimation of a woman."

"You still profess your determination, Clarence," asked his sister, "not to marry a girl with a bad temper."

"Most decidedly, Agnes," said Leslie. "I am a hasty fellow myself as you know, and if my wife were not as sweet tempered as you are, dear sister, I shall be miserable, however much I might love and admire her."

"If sweet temper is to win you," said Agnes, "beware of your heart this evening, Clarence, at least, if your heart is still in your own keeping."

"I believe it is," replied Leslie, with a sigh.

"Whose is that sigh?" asked Agnes, as she now sat down beside her brother, with her embroidery frame before her. "Come, Leslie, make me your confessor, and tell me, is Lucy Colville to be my sister?"
"Never, Agnes," said his lordship; "most positively never. I tell you again she is not good-tempered."

"Don't you wish she were, Clarence?" asked Agnes, slyly.

"I understand you, my mischievous sister," said Leslie. "You think I am in love with Lucy, and that I shall marry her in the face of my oft repeated professions."

"Perhaps I do," said Agnes.

"You are wrong, Agnes," observed her brother. "Henrietta Brown was staying at the deanery."

"Who is she?" demanded Lady Agnes.

"A very handsome good-tempered girl whom we met at the Heathdowns. Don't you remember her?" asked Lord Leslie.

"Not in the least," replied his sister.

"Where does she come from?"

"She lives at a pretty place called the Knoll, about half a mile out of Hereford," said Clarence.
"I never heard of it," coolly remarked her ladyship.

"I daresay not," replied her brother. "Nevertheless Henrietta Brown is one of the nicest girls I have seen since I returned from India."

"Brown," said Lady Agnes, "Is her father one of the Canons of the Cathedral?"

"I never took the trouble to inquire," answered Leslie. "Henrietta is going to stay with Mrs. Williams at Swansea this autumn. You remember Mrs. Williams, Agnes? She used to be a friend of my mother's before she married a Welsh clergyman with only a moderate living. There is no one I have a more lively recollection of whom I knew as a boy. A pretty delicate woman, with soft blue eyes, and so sweet tempered, I verily believe it was this best of nature's gifts shining forth in Miss Johnstone which induced me to profess, early in life, that my wife must be good tempered."
"Well, Clarence," said Agnes, "I shall see some of these days, what kind of a sister you will give me. It is not to be Lucy Colville, you say—perhaps Henrietta Brown? Rather a plebeian name."

Lord Leslie coloured.

"But that you will improve. I have never yet formed matrimonial schemes for you. In joke I used to write about Lucy, and I have sometimes wished you may love Constance Davenant; but that you will not do, for she is plain. At Pemberton Castle I fancied I had met the very girl to captivate you, Clarence;" and now Lady Agnes coloured, "but she was pre-occupied, otherwise I do think Miss Murray is just your style of person. Did you not admire her, Leslie?"

Her brother sighed again.

"Well, I suppose I don't know your taste."

"By the way," said Lord Leslie, "Clive will be here to day, Agnes. At least he
told me he should, or something to that effect."

"Papa has written to put him off," said Lady Agnes. "The house will be quite full."

"I am glad of it," said Clarence. "I don't like Clive, and I congratulate you on your escape, Agnes."

She busied herself with her work.

"Helen Murray is too good for him," continued Leslie; "but I suppose she likes him."

"I think you are unfair to Henry," said Agnes, who had recovered her composure. "Indeed I cannot understand the ground of your dislike, unless it be that he has succeeded with Miss Murray."

Lord Leslie was stung by this remark, which his sister uttered quite unconscious of the effect it would produce; for she had not the slightest idea that Helen had made the impression upon her brother which she really had done; and she
merely said these words in badinage to cover her consciousness of interest in the subject.

Lord Leslie hastily rose, and looking at his watch, pronounced it the hour of luncheon and left the room.
"Well, Matilda, I think you are a very foolish girl," said her sister. "Archer certainly all but popped the question at the pic-nic at Brynmour Wood. Everybody saw him down on his knees to you, and I have told half a dozen people he made you an offer; and yet you say he is only joking. If such is really the case, lose no more time with him, but try what you can do with the eldest Pemberton; or, what say you to Sir Trevor?"
But mamma would not like that. It would just now be an interference with her."

"And one that would answer no purpose either, Hetty," said Matilda, who was considerably in the dumps, for Major Archer had left the neighbourhood, and merely written a short note to Mrs. Brown saying he was off to the continent, and on his return he hoped to find them as handsome and as jolly as ever. He added a postscript that he should come back loaded with French gloves and bon bons.

Henrietta Brown had that morning returned from the deanery, and she was full of the handsome, the interesting, the charming Lord Leslie. "Oh, Matilda, if I could succeed in gaining his heart," sighed Hetty. "What a perfect moustache he has, and I think his lameness so becoming. He only wants his arm in a sling to be a perfect picture of a soldier lover."
"Romantic folly," said Matilda. "But tell me, do you really hope that you have made an impression on Leslie?"

"I am almost sure I have. At least Lucy Colville is jealous, and that is something towards it," said Hetty.

"What other grounds have you for hoping to become a Countess?" asked Matilda, in a tone of pique; for her own bright prospects of figuring in the Baronetage seemed at an end, and she could not enter with satisfaction into her sister's hopes of being blazoned forth in the peerage.

"My next ground of hope consists in the certainty that Lord Leslie thinks me handsome," said Hetty.

"How in the world do you know that?" asked Matilda.

"Why," replied Hetty, "my maid heard his lordship's valet tell Mrs. Colville's housekeeper that his lord thought me the handsomest girl he had seen since his return to England."
Matilda laughed. "Well, go on," she said. "Slippery ground at present, Hetty. I hope you will get a more firm footing before you make sure of victory."

"I am not much afraid," said Henrietta, "if I can but have an opportunity of seeing Lord Leslie; and I know my way to that, I think."

"But more grounds of hope," demanded Matilda. "Surely Lucy's supposed jealousy and your beauty won't ensure you success."

"Well, then, listen and be convinced, as I am, that Lord Leslie may be won," said Henrietta. "I overheard him say to Ernest Pemberton, who dined at the deanery last night, 'Whatever you do, Pemberton, choose a wife with good temper.' Mr. Pemberton's reply was, 'But how to find that out, all is so smooth before marriage.' I was seated near to them, apparently interested in an annual I had before me, but not really knowing whether the book were
up side down or no. Lord Leslie's reply was charming; and tell me, Matilda, if you don't think so. He said, 'The easiest thing in the world, Ernest. Look there,' and now his voice sunk so low that none but the anxious ears of a girl bent on the conquest of the speaker could have distinguished his words. 'Look at that handsome girl.' I felt their eyes were upon me, but I did not blush. I have great self-command, you know.'

"Impudence, you mean," interrupted Matilda.

"Well, call it what you will," said Henrietta; "but to proceed, as I was saying, his lordship said in a whisper, 'Look at that handsome girl, Ernest, she is sweet-tempered.' 'What is the sign of it?' demanded Mr. Pemberton. I am no physionymist.' 'Nor am I, said Lord Leslie, but there is an indiscernible something that cannot be mistaken. I would venture my happiness there if..."
good temper would secure it.' At that moment I was addressed by Sir Trevor Dolman, and I heard no more. Hadn't I pleasant dreams last night, Matilda? And now what do you think of my chance of becoming a Countess?"

"A very fair one, Hetty," said Matilda, "if mamma don't mar it; she often does us mischief, I fear. She is still so young looking and handsome that she cannot give in to her daughters. She gets her pleasant flirtations, and we must cater for ourselves. I verily believe Archer would have offered to me if mamma had not spoiled him by her nonsensical flattery. That is quite at an end now, and as you say, I must try for Ernest Pemberton. Frank might do, but not so well, besides I think he has more nous, and would be more difficult to catch."

"Now, Matilda," said Henrietta, not having heard a word of her sister's plans for self-exaltation, "promise me not to
tell mamma what I have related to you. Will you promise me?"

"I shall not let the cat out of the bag, you may be sure," said Miss Brown. "What is your plan?"

"To meet Lord Leslie without mamma," replied Henrietta. "You know she would immediately seize upon him if she could; and then ten to one he would never notice me."

"Well, but your plan?" asked Matilda.

"It is this," said Hetty; "to go and pay Mrs. Williams a visit, as she has often proposed it. I found out by accident that Lord Leslie knows her; so I began to talk of her as an intimate friend, though you know I cannot bear her; she is so prudish and mincing. However, I professed great admiration of her, as I found Lord Leslie likes her. He said he was going into Wales for sea bathing in the autumn, it having been recommended for the complete recovery of his lameness, and that he
should make a point of going to see Mrs. Williams. I could not find out exactly when his visit would be paid, but that I mean to do, and to be there at the same time."

"Well, Henrietta, you are determined," said Matilda. "I wonder Helen Murray is not here. She promised to be with us early."

The girls were in their own sitting room, and Jack joined them at this moment. Soon afterwards Miss Murray was announced. Jack rushed down to the library.

"Well, Helen," he exclaimed, "here you are at last. You must come up stairs. Matilda and Hetty want you." Helen obeyed the rough summons, and made her way up two flights of stairs to the sitting room of the Miss Browns. It was their old nursery, and they preferred it, for many reasons, to any other in the house; so they had refused one on the first landing, to the great
surprise of their mamma, who could not enter into their feelings of preferring an old room up a pair of back stairs, because they remembered the happy hours of childhood passed there, to a modern luxurious room on the ground staircase. But, in that room, they could do just what they liked uninterrupted, for Mrs. Brown seldom got so far.

Here Helen found her friends, so they called themselves, though now they were little together, for Mrs. Brown had not, during the last year, once invited Helen to stay in her house. Her fear, nay, her certainty that her son John admired her, was the real reason of her neglect of Miss Murray. The one she gave to those curious people, who always inquire into the whys and wherefores of every body's conduct, was, that Miss Murray had become quite too grand to associate with her daughters; and then she would say how Helen had passed her by at this or that ball, because she went with the
Heathdowns or the Colvilles, or some one else who thought themselves grand. This was very unfair to our heroine, and quite untrue. She was much too well bred ever to be rude to Mrs. Brown, and the girls she liked for their good nature and excessive good temper. It is true she felt constantly disgusted with Mrs. Brown's vulgarity, and it is also true that she shrunk from any great intimacy with her, and Mrs. Melbourne had made some excuse for Helen when Mrs. Brown had offered to take her to her first ball. But it was done so judiciously by the cautious Mrs. Melbourne, that Mrs. Brown could not possibly acknowledge she was offended; so she continued to call at the cottage, and she professed all sorts of kindnesses, talked of Mrs. Melbourne's staying at the Knoll, said she would send fruit and flowers, and that she would take her and Helen to the sea-side. In short, professions without end always flowed fast from the loquacious Mrs.
Brown whenever she drove to Mayfield. But she did not deceive her friends; Mrs. Melbourne had early discovered the true state of the case, and Helen was now also convinced, and a laugh always followed Mrs. Brown's departure from the cottage. Helen had gone to the Knoll that morning, as her aunt thought it right she should call there occasionally in order to give no just cause of offence, and also to show the Browns that their present conduct was not at all resented.

The girls immediately attacked our heroine on her reported engagement to Mr. Clive, and congratulated her in form. Helen utterly denied it.

"Didn't I tell you so, Matilda? didn't I say Helen would never have Mr. Clive?" exclaimed Jack, clapping his hands, and taking a seat close to Miss Murray on the sofa.

"I must wait till I am asked, Mr. John Brown, at all events," said Helen,
rising from the couch, and moving near to the open window.

"Do you find the room warm?" asked Matilda. "We thought it damp, and so ordered a fire. I suppose love keeps you in a fever Helen."

"Oh, yes, to be sure," said the laughing Henrietta. "You need not deny it Helen. Mr. Clive acknowledges it, and so we are not likely to believe you."

"I am sure Mr. Clive does nothing of the kind," said Helen, who began to be very vexed.

"At least, his relations speak of it," added Henrietta.

"Which of them?" asked Jack, who began now to doubt Miss Murray's truthfulness, and looked very blank.

"Why, Lord Leslie was naming it at the deanery," said Hetty.

"Now I know you are talking sheer nonsense, Henrietta," observed Helen. "Lord Leslie knows very well, I am not engaged to his cousin."
"Why you don't flatter yourself, Miss Murray," said Hetty, somewhat sus-
picious of his lordship's admiration of her friend, "that Lord Leslie cares
whether you are or not?"

"I know," said Helen, "that Lord Leslie would care, and very much too,
if he thought Mr. Clive loved me."

"I don't at all understand you, Helen," remarked Hetty. "I wish you
would not speak in riddles."

"You must not interfere with Hetty in that quarter," said Matilda Brown,
"or she will be furious."

"What do you mean by interfering, and by that quarter?" asked Helen, not
at all understanding the jargon of these young ladies.

Matilda was about to explain her sister's well concocted plot to secure
the conquest of the young Lord, but Henrietta stopped her by saying—
"Matilda, not one word, or I'll tell Helen your scheme, remember."
"I do not wish to hear any of your secrets," said Helen, who grew very weary of this kind of conversation.

"You don't deserve to hear them," said Miss Brown, "for you won't tell us yours."

"I have none," observed Helen.

"What a humdrum life you must lead then," exclaimed Hetty. "You surely don't tell your aunt everything?"

"Indeed I do, Henrietta," replied Miss Murray. "But my everything would be very uninteresting to any one who loved me less than dear Aunt Melbourne."

"I have a secret I want to intrust you with, Helen," said Jack Brown. "Will you have it?"

"I know it," exclaimed Hetty.

"And I guess it," cried Matilda, adding in the same moment, "shall we go?" and jumping up, the two wild girls ran out of the room.

Jack was rather taken by surprise,
but he summoned courage, and not wanting either impudence or self-esteem, he approached Helen, who still retained her seat near to the open window, and he sat down beside her. "Helen," said he, "I love you," and he tried to seize her hand.

"Mr. John Brown," said the indignant girl, "if your sisters choose to be rude, and foolish, and disagreeable, that is no excuse for you." Helen rose from her chair. "Pray allow me to pass you, that I may seek them."

"Not yet, dear Helen, by Heavens!" and Jack again took her hand, and obliged her to resume her seat. Helen felt very angry, but seeing she could not escape, and believing it was a concocted plot between the brother and sisters, she sat quite still whilst Jack declared his long, his ardent passion for her. He told her the anxious hours he had had, the sleepless nights he had passed. How jealous
he had been one moment, when he thought she preferred another, how happy the next, when he felt certain of her love.

Helen, at last, became very impatient. She arose, she looked out of the window, and, to her utter dismay she saw the Miss Browns walking in a distant part of the garden.

"Helen," said the enamoured Jack, "you do not speak to me; but I am satisfied. Silence, you know, gives consent—and so, you love me," and he tried to draw her from the window.

She shrunk from his touch as though he were a loathsome reptile; and if he had been one, poor Helen's disgust could not have been greater.

At that moment Mrs. Brown appeared on the lawn, and shouting "Matilda!" she looked up at her daughter's room. She saw Helen, and she thought she caught a glimpse of her son. She was out of sight in an instant, and,
just as Jack had fallen on one knee before Helen, and declared he would marry her in spite of any opposition, the door opened as Helen said "pray rise Mr. Brown, indeed your suit is vain."

"As it is ridiculous and sinful," exclaimed his mother, who now entered the room, and banged the door behind her.

Jack tried to get up, but, in his hurry and confusion, he caught his long awkward legs in the bar of a chair, and down he fell, and there he lay sprawling before his enraged mother and the hard hearted Helen, who now could not refrain from a hearty laugh at her lover's expense, though, just before, she had felt much more inclined to cry, so mortified was she to have been tricked into listening to a declaration of love from the disagreeable Jack Brown.

"Upon my word, Miss Murray," exclaimed Mrs. Brown, "I did not expect
this conduct from you. Get up, Jack, I could really laugh at you myself if I were less angry;" and she extended her hand in order to assist her "awkward boy," as she called him. "And now, sir, explain to me what nonsense you have been about; and do you, Miss Murray, try to be serious, and listen to me;" for Helen was still much inclined to laughter, as she was now released, and she hoped for ever, from the importunities of Jack, and she could with difficulty resist showing her real enjoyment of a scene so truly ridiculous.

There was Mrs. Brown in a towering passion, the hue of rage on her cheek quite sending into the shade the delicate touch of art. There was Jack just on his legs again, looking as foolish and sheepish as may be, and evidently watching his opportunity for "a bolt." There was Helen, her laugh ended, and her graceful figure drawn up to its full height, standing in proud obedience to Mrs.
Brown's command that she would listen to her.

Mrs. Brown thus began. "Miss Murray, it seems to me that you have crept into my house this morning for the express purpose of making my son ridiculous, and you have been gratified to the utmost. This must be highly satisfactory to a young lady so notoriously amiable as yourself. Mr. John Brown, you have shown yourself a fool, a born fool. You have, I suppose, offered to Miss Murray—to a girl without money, without rank, and without beauty enough to excuse your total want of prudence and ambition. Miss Murray, the words I heard from your lips on my entrance lead me to believe you have refused my son. Mortifying as that must be, degrading as it is, I hope it is the case. Of the two evils it is the least."

Helen could scarcely command herself. However, temper, uncontrolled temper, was so disgustedly before her now, that
she redoubled her efforts, and, after the pause of a minute, during which Mrs. Brown almost gaped for breath in this vehemence of her rage.

Helen said, "I am very sorry for the occurences of this morning, Mrs. Brown, but I am not at all answerable for them. I called upon your daughters, they ran away from me, and your son seized that opportunity to declare a love for me, which I assure you I can never return, and so I have told him."

This simple unvarnished tale, told quietly and almost feelingly by Helen, had its effect on Mrs. Brown. She could not but believe her, for no one better knew her character, and, if envy and jealousy could have been laid asleep, Mrs. Brown would have known how to do justice to Helen Murray. But now, added to her previous feelings of vexation as regarded her, there was the mortifying certainty that she had refused her son; and worse than that, all the world would
know it. This thought stung poor Mrs. Brown to the quick, and she passionately desired Miss Murray to leave her presence. Jack now interfered. He prevented Helen from obeying his mother by forcibly detaining her hand in his. He approached Mrs. Brown, and with rage equal to her own, said—"Madam, fool as I am in your opinion, I am not fool enough to be kept in baby's leading strings all my life. Nay, Helen, try not to escape, you shall hear me tell my mother my mind;" and he held her hand as if it were in a vice, so firm and strong was the grasp. Helen was, therefore, obliged to be an unwilling witness of the violence of this mother and son, and very painful was it to her, as she knew herself to be the exciting cause. However, there was no help for it. Jack continued his bitter harangue, and Mrs. Brown sank into a chair, and seemed somewhat subdued by the passionate manner and language of her son. He
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said, "I have told Helen Murray I love her, which you know, and she knows too I have done for years; yes, for years; young as we both are, I have loved her for years. I have made no secret of it. Everybody has seen it. I have never till now professed my love to her in form, but I have shown it to her in a thousand ways if she chose to understand me. Perhaps you may think I have deceived you, mother," continued Jack, his anger somewhat softened by the subdued manner of his mother; "and, perhaps, I have latterly, but why? for present peace and quietness—no worse motive, believe me. I did not intend to speak to Miss Murray to-day, or to-morrow, or perhaps for the next year; but I always have meant to marry her. Yes, and I do still, Helen; for I have vowed I would have the girl I professed love to."

Helen insisted on being released. Jack was obdurate. "I have almost finished,"
he said; "and now, mother, make the best of it. Helen has refused me—that's true—but Helen shall yet be my wife. Remember this, both of you, and mind what you say or do. Jack Brown may be a fool, a born fool, but he will be found an obstinate and a determined one." And he rushed out of the room.

Poor Helen was pale as death, and trembled like an aspen leaf. Mrs. Brown went off into violent hysterics, which frightened her excessively, as she did not understand them, but they had the good effect of rousing her, and she exerted herself to assist this very excitable and foolish woman. Helen rang the bell, and a maid appearing she made her escape and asked for the Miss Browns, who came running into the library. Jack had seen them, and in a few words had described the scene which had taken place. They both began together. "Well, Helen, after all you will be our sister. Do you remember our telling
you, years ago, how fond somebody was of you? That was Jack. Do you recollect our saying somebody had a lock of your hair? That was Jack. Do you remember how certain we were somebody would propose to you as soon as you came out? That was Jack.”

Helen tried to stop them, but on they went:—“We thought then you liked him, but afterwards we thought you liked somebody better, and we felt angry with you, for we quite meant you should know it was Jack, though we never told you his name, and we thought you guessed it. We told Jack you did not care for him now—you looked higher, you were so much admired. He was quite down about it. We persuaded him to make love to Lucy Colville, and we asked him not to notice you; for we thought, dear Helen, you had rather jilted our brother. Then we heard you were to be Mrs. Clive. Jack said you never should. We bullied him and told
him 'faint heart never won fair lady,' and if he never asked he could never have. So yesterday he made up his mind to speak to you the first moment he could, and that was the reason we left you together, Helen. I am so glad we shall have a wedding, but we did not think Jack would be married first."

"My dear Matilda, my dear Henrietta," said Helen, "you are under a great mistake, believe me. But your mamma is ill; pray go to her."

"Oh," cried the girls, "she is only in a pet, we can do her no good. But perhaps you want to see Jack, for he said mamma came in and spoiled the fun."

"Did not your brother then tell you," asked Helen, "that I refused his love?"

"Oh, he said something about your agitation and your fears when mamma appeared," said Matilda; "but he considers, I am sure, that you have ac-
accepted him, and he desires we will make no secret of it.”

“He is very provoking and acts very wrongly,” said Helen. “Will you tell him, Henrietta, from me, that I beg he will never mention the subject again; and now I must return home.”

“I shall not ‘meddle or make,’ most certainly,” said Hetty. “You and Jack must settle it between you.”

“But you don’t walk home?” asked Matilda.

“Oh, no,” said Helen. “I am going to the Youngs, and they drive me back. Good bye.” And she thought to herself, “I am very sorry I came here today.”

“Poor thing, poor thing,” they both cried, as they kissed Helen, and assuring her Jack would soon be at Mayfield, they returned to their room, and idled away the next hour in talking over the probabilities and impossibilities of the future.
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Helen was fatigued, excited, and annoyed beyond measure by the proposal of young Brown; for she had often professed it as her opinion that no girl would have an offer unless she encouraged a man. When she arrived at the Youngs, she found they had began to think that she had forgotten her engagement, as she was ten minutes after her time. Mrs. Young lectured her on the virtue of punctuality, and boasted how she had improved Arthur in that respect. "Indeed," she said, "he never errs in that way excepting when he is going the rounds of the parish, and then time passes so quickly in the performance of his duties, that he is apt to keep me waiting, and then I have to pacify the cook, who says if we don't dine punctually at five, she can't be ready for evening service; besides, a later hour is very extravagant—kitchen fire burning away, candles carrying about, and that I can't stand."
Helen looked very mischievous as she glanced her dark eye on Mr. Young, for his frequent calls at the cottage were often the occasion of his want of punctuality; but Mrs. Young did not exactly know this, she only suspected it.

Mr. Young was a very old friend of Mrs. Melbourne. Indeed he had wished to marry her in early life, but thinking he had little chance of being accepted, he had never proposed to the then lovely and accomplished Miss Murray; so that their friendship had no disagreeable or awkward recollections attached to it. Arthur Young was related distantly to her husband, and they had been for years in habits of intimacy. He was Helen's godfather, and a very affectionate and generous one he was. He had married when he was almost thirty a lady much older than himself. How it came to pass no one ever knew. Some guessed her fortune tempted him, for she was rich. Others said he really
admired her, and as he appeared very happy under her matronly guidance, there is every reason to believe it was so, as such instances do occur of men really loving women many years older than themselves. They are generally handsome women though, and Arthur’s wife could not boast of beauty. If he had the advantage over her in youth and good looks, she had the master mind and the full pocket, and they really on the whole got on capitally. She professed to manage him, though she knew it was more than she could always accomplish; and he professed himself to be managed, though he chuckled in his sleeve in the comfortable conviction that he often got his own way.

Luncheon dispatched at the Youngs; this ill-sorted, but still satisfied pair got into their nice close carriage and took Helen back to Mayfield. They left her at home, but, as Mrs. Melbourne was out, they did not alight.
Helen rested herself in her own little boudoir till her aunt returned, and that evening the book was laid aside, and over her work she related the events of the morning to Mrs. Melbourne, who was not surprised to hear Mr. John Brown had made his avowal of love to her niece, and still less so to learn the fury and mortification it had caused his mother. The aunt and niece agreed never to mention the subject to any one and they both believed they had heard the last of it, and that now Mrs. Brown would be aware that her son was in no danger from the attraction of Helen.

"And now, my love," said her aunt, "we will go to bed, for to-morrow is Sunday, and we must be up earlier."

"Oh, yes, I have to prepare for my class," said Helen, with a decided yawn. "I must rise with the lark. Good night, dear aunt."

"God bless and preserve you, my darling Helen."
Sunday passed away as usual in that peaceful happy village, excepting, perhaps, that Mr. Clive did not read with his usual attention, nor was his manner of preaching so energetic. Mrs. Melbourne remarked it to Helen, and when they saw him for a moment, after the service, they agreed he was out of spirits. The next morning they were confirmed in their opinion. At eleven o'clock Henry Clive was at the cottage, and he
put a letter into Mrs. Melbourne’s hand.

"From my uncle," said he. "Read it, dear Mrs. Melbourne, and then tell me what you think. Pray do not go away, Miss Murray," he continued, as Helen was about to leave the room, "you, also, are in my confidence, and I am sure feel interested for Agnes, if not for me."

"Indeed I do, for both of you, Mr. Clive," replied Helen.

Mrs. Melbourne read Lord Moreton’s letter, which ran thus.—

"Dear Henry,—My house is full just now. I will write again when I can have you. I gave Agnes your note. She joins us in kind regards.

"Believe me, yours sincerely,

"MORETON."

Mrs. Melbourne returned it to Mr. Clive, saying "very cool indeed, I think." He put it into Helen’s hand, and when she had read it her aunt asked her if she did not think so.
"Indeed I do, and I don't like Lord Moreton at all, Mr. Clive," exclaimed Helen.

"He certainly writes very odd letters," said Henry, "lately; but you would like my uncle, Miss Murray, exceedingly, if you knew him well. He is one of the most kind hearted men I know, and has very good natural abilities; but though he had every advantage of education, he never had a taste for study, consequently, he is not what is called a clever man, though learned, would, I think be a more appropriate term, for Lord Moreton is decidedly clever. He has a large fund of wit, and he is exceedingly lively. His temper, too, is the very best I ever knew a man of his endowments to possess, for I have generally found good temper in men accompanied by a weakness of intellect and indecision of purpose. But it is not so in my uncle's case."

"I have always heard Lord Moreton spoken of with the highest praise," said
Mrs. Melbourne. "So good to his poor dependants, so liberal to his tenantry, so generous to his friends. I am, therefore, more surprised at his conduct to you, for I do think, in opposition to Lord Leslie, that your uncle's first letter did not at all express what I suppose it was intended to do, pleasure at the prospect of his daughter's and your union. If such a thing were possible, I should have gathered from it that you had forgotten your first attachment in another; that your uncle rejoiced in it; that Lady Agnes was either piqued or indifferent; or, that the message from her was an invention of the writer."

"It never struck me before," said Clive, "that the letter could be so interpreted. But it is quite impossible that such a mistake could arise. And Leslie, too, was so very decided. I suppose I must rest satisfied for the next few days, and then, if I don't hear from Moreton Court, I shall write to Agnes for an
explanation. In the mean while I have enough to do in my parish. Poor Hannah cannot last long, Miss Murray and Richard Astley is very ill, and so is little Ann Morris. I am not sorry to be able to see them often just now;” but, as Clive said this, he looked anything but glad.

“Good often comes out of evil, Mr. Clive,” observed Mrs. Melbourne, “and I hope this delay of your visit will be amply made up for, by the happiness which is in store for you.”

Clive busied himself hour after hour, and day after day, for the next week. Still no letter arrived from his uncle, and he became restless and uneasy.

In the meanwhile invitations had been out for Sir Trevor Dolman’s fancy ball. That he should give a ball at all surprised half his acquaintance, but that it should be a fancy ball astonished every one, and almost made them think it was a hoax. Soon, however, it was known
whose influence had been at work, for Mrs. Brown was too proud of it not to tell every one that Sir Trevor gave the ball to please her, and that she had declared it should be a fancy one.

Some few people in the county were pleased at the opportunity of coming out in new characters and new dresses. Others expected great amusement from the many heterogeneous figures who would undoubtedly be there. But the generality of the people who were invited, had the good taste to wish it had been a less fantastical entertainment.

Helen Murray had had a note of invitation, and the Heathdowns had asked her to go with them. Her aunt had consented to her doing so, though she did not at all like the display necessarily attendant on appearing in a fancy dress. However, she knew Helen's modest simple taste would lead her to choose a costume and a character
as unexceptionable as possible; nor was she mistaken, for after due consideration, she had decided to go as a French peasant girl. Her complexion, and her style of beauty were well suited to represent one of the pretty girls of Normandy, and she had prevailed on Lady Heathdown to appear as a Norman matron. Helen had succeeded in making one of the grotesque caps worn by that class of women in the north of France, and Lord Heathdown was charmed with the head-dress his little wife was to wear, and declared he wished he were a native of Normandy, that her ladyship might always be so becomingly dressed. The material of the cap was the richest old point. It gained Helen immense credit. She made it the day that she and her aunt spent at Pemberton Castle, when she directed Lady Heathdown's maid as to the rest of the costume; and she sketched, for Lord Heathdown's satis-
faction, the whole dress, as well as the one she meant to wear herself. He was delighted, and quite entered into the fun of the thing, and was amongst the number of those who expected great amusement from the fancy ball. Lady Heathdown sighed, and wished Sir Trevor would go on in his own stupid way, and not be persuaded by a silly vain woman to do silly disagreeable things. Indeed her ladyship accepted the invitation solely on Helen's account, for it was only on the condition that she took charge of her niece that Mrs. Melbourne allowed Helen to be of the party; the kind unselfish Lady Heathdown at once submitted to the fatigue and disagreeables of a costume, to give her dear little girl, as as she called Helen, a few hours' pleasure—and Helen, to show her gratitude, was busying herself with her ladyship's dress, and leaving nothing for her to think of as concerned it.
Lewis Pemberton declared he would be a Norman shepherd, and have his crook and his pipe; and so it was settled, and he was happy, for he was sure it would be his right place to keep by the side of his "pretty sister," as he designated Helen in her new character.

Lord Heathdown thought of assuming the character of Rollo, and his two eldest sons intended to personate warriors of the same date. Lady Aston, who was still at the castle, was to go as Diana Vernon, by the express wish of Sir James, who meant to appear as an Osbaldiston, but which of that numberless family, he had not decided upon. Lady Aston would have preferred a less conspicuous character, but she never thwarted her husband; and Sir James said his wife never looked so well as in her riding habit; so a habit of silk was accordingly being made after the fashion of the time of the Osbal-
distons. And thus, the family at Pemberton Castle, and most likely that of every other mansion in the county was, just then, agitating the question of what dress and what characters would best suit them, or do most honor to the fancy ball of Sir Trevor Dolman.

He had "bargained," as he expressed himself (and he was a man who well knew how to drive a bargain;) with Mrs. Brown, that he, as master of the house, should not appear in costume, and though Mrs. Brown did not quite like this determination, as she had hoped to persuade the Baronet to be Darnley to her Mary Queen of Scots, she was obliged to give up the point, at least, she was quick enough to see she had better do so.

Mrs. Brown called one day at Deerfold, in order to give her opinion as to the arrangements, and Sir Trevor could not have consulted a better person on
the occasion, as Mrs. Brown had the happy art in these matters of adjusting every thing in the most perfect manner; and, on the evening of the entertainment, those who did not know who had been the presiding genius of the decorations, expressed their surprise to find that Sir Trevor was really a man of taste. However, it was all Mrs. Brown, and, so long as she would allow the Baronet to dress in his plain clothes, and be Sir Trevor Dolman, he gave her carte blanche as regarded every thing else.

Mrs. Brown's great wish was that the Baronet should show her marked consideration on the evening of his ball, when all the county would be there to see it; and she cared not much whether it was in the character of Darnley or not. Perhaps, indeed, it would be more flattering to receive the Baronet's attention in his own plain garb, and as master of the revels. And so Mrs. Brown argued herself into good
humour on Sir Trevor's flat denial of her request.

As she and her daughters drove home from Deerfold, she told them Sir Trevor was an unmanageable fool, and she should pity the woman who married him.

"And yet mamma," said Matilda, "you used to say you would like me to have him."

"I didn't know him so well, then," said her mother.

"But I always told you, mamma," added Matilda, "that his temper was bad; he used to show it even in a quadrille or a polka. How horribly he dances, too."

"He does, indeed," said Henrietta. Dancing was one of the few things the Miss Browns excelled in. "I am glad Sir Trevor never asked me."

"I get on very well with him," observed their mother, who still waltzed and polkad to the merriment of some,
the disgust of others, and the wonder of all.

"Yes, mamma," said Henrietta, "but you are not particular."

"I don't know what you mean, Miss," retorted her mother. "I have generally much better partners, in every respect, than my daughters have, and I had had plenty of offers before I was your age, Hetty; and Jack was born when I was yours, Matilda."

"Oh, I daresay," said Matilda; "but you were satisfied to marry a lawyer, and we are looking a little higher, mamma."

"Take care you don't fall a little lower in your attempted ascent," said the sarcastic mother. "I saw Powis the other morning, and he humbly asked me to be allowed the honor of calling. You know I have been cool with him lately. He will come, you may be sure; so mind what you are about, Matilda."

"Matilda don't care for that little
fright, and a banker, too," exclaimed Hetty.

"Well, he is a rich one, at all events," said Mrs. Brown, "and money will buy anything, remember that, girls. I can excuse either of you marrying money, if there is plenty of it; so don't wait too long for what you may'nt get. Lords and Right Honorables are scarce articles in these times, at least, in horrid Hereford. There is nothing in that dirty hole but a few proud canons and poor vicars. I abhor black coats, and I begin to think Powis the banker no despicable match for you, Matilda, after all."

"Yes, after all," said the saucy and handsome Hetty, "he may do for Matilda. She has one more chance of escaping such an alternative."

"And what's that, pray?" asked the mother, with indifference, for she had quite given up Matilda to her own devices, as she had been long weary of trying to get her a husband. Henrietta,
on the contrary, was just out, and Mrs. Brown expected, without much trouble on her part, to see this beauty of the family well married; and, if no younger man, or one of higher rank, came forward, she flattered herself Sir Trevor Dolman might be won some day for this youngest daughter, if not by her.

Matilda had frowned at Henrietta in order to silence her, when she was about to tell her mother her plans for securing a husband. And the three ladies became silent for the rest of the drive home, each occupied with her own particular scheme, and each determined to commence her operations at this ensuing fancy ball.

Days rolled on, and nothing of moment occurred at Mayfield Cottage. Mr. John Brown had called the day Mrs. Melbourne and Helen spent at Pemberton Castle, and very glad they were to have missed him.

Mr. Clive not hearing from his uncle.
Lord Moreton, had written to Lady Agnes, but as yet she had not answered him. He was restless and unhappy, and if he had not had Mrs. Melbourne and Helen to listen to his hopes and his fears, and to sympathize with him, poor Henry Clive would have been much more miserable than he was.

Just at this time Mrs. Melbourne received a letter from Mr. Fairfax, inviting her and Helen to stay at Avondale, which was about thirty miles from Mayfield. He said he would send his carriage for them, and he hoped they would remain a week or ten days. Mrs. Melbourne's inclination led her to decline this invitation, for she was little disposed to leave her own quiet home; but she felt she owed a duty to Helen, and also that it was incumbent on her not entirely to give up all intercourse with this old friend of her husband, who had always professed so great a regard for him in his life-time, and who had also professed
a wish to be of use to her. Mrs. Melbourne talked over the invitation with Helen, and then decided to accept it. It was for the end of October, about a week after the fancy ball at Deerfold. Mrs. Melbourne told her niece she was certain to have a delightful visit at Avondale.

"Mrs. Fairfax is a most fascinating creature, very beautiful and very amiable," said Mrs. Melbourne. "He is clever, and when he likes a person he is most agreeable. He is not noted for sincerity, and he is thought sarcastic. However, I have hitherto found him pleasant and kind."

"Have they any children, Aunt Melbourne?" asked Helen.

"Only one son," said her aunt, "whom I have not seen since he was fifteen. He cannot now be more than twenty. I hear Edward Fairfax is very handsome, very like his mother."

"Perhaps we shall see Lady Agnes
Scott,” said Helen, “as I think Moreton Court is not very far from Avondale.”

“Only a short drive,” said Mrs. Melbourne. “The Moretons have always happened to be from home when I have been with the Fairfaxes.”

“I hope they will not be away when we go there; don’t you, aunt?” said Helen.

“Yes, love,” replied Mrs. Melbourne, “I much wish to make their acquaintance, especially Lord Leslie’s, as he saw so much of my poor brother in his last illness.”

“I wonder if you will know his lordship from my description,” said Helen.

“I expect to do so, certainly,” said her aunt; “or I shall pronounce you to be a bad draughtswoman, and not employ you again; so if you have flattered Lord Leslie, you had better correct your sketch, Helen, before the original comes under my eye.”

Helen was delighted to see her aunt
so animated, and so like her former self, and she hoped she was recovering her spirits and her health too, by sure, though slow steps.

The day of the Deerfold fancy ball had now arrived, and Helen Murray bid her Aunt Melbourne an affectionate adieu as she stepped into Lord Heathdown's carriage, which arrived at the cottage soon after breakfast to take her to Pemberton Castle.
Moreton Court was full of guests. Lady Agnes Scott apparently was joyous and happy, and Lord Leslie seemed to be with those who interested him exceedingly. Lord Davenant and his sister, the Fairfaxes, the two elder Pembertons, the Maxwells, and Sir Trevor Dolman were staying in the house, besides three or four others who were invited to fill up the table and to occupy the inferior bed rooms of this lordly mansion, but
who neither added to nor detracted from the pleasure of the party. Those of our readers who understand these things from having made part of the odd compound which amalgamates on such occasions, will not require to be told how the mornings are lost—how the afternoons are got rid of, and what a relief is the dinner hour, especially when the cook is a good one, which was the case at Moreton Court, for the Earl kept an excellent table, and was not satisfied with plenty, but contended that it should be the very best of its kind, and served in the very first style. Lord Moreton was no epicure, but every dish on his table was excellent, and the flavour of his wine was unmatched.

The frequenter of such houses also knows how the evening is trifled away, and when he finds himself alone in his own room, his castle for the time, how glad he occasionally feels that in two more days, or perhaps in one, he will be re-
leased from a thraldom which he only endured in order to have it in his power to say that he has been staying at Moreton Court, and that he met my Lord this, and her Grace of that, and the Honorable Mr. C. and the clever Dr. B.

It was on the morning after the arrival of their guests that Agnes Scott was enjoying in her boudoir a tete a tete with her friend Constance Davenant. She had, the evening before, told her of Henry Clive's conduct, and they agreed not again to discuss the subject. Constance was surprised and much disgusted at the barefaced hypocrisy of Clive, and she did not spare him in her expressions of condemnation. Agnes could not, in her heart, defend him, so she was silent, and was only too glad not again to be obliged to speak of him. Constance said she must confess she had some curiosity to see the girl who could be the occasion of such conduct, and
who could thus make Henry forget one to whom he had been attached for years, and to whom he had professed eternal constancy.

Agnes did Helen Murray ample justice in her description of her, and she also said she hoped that Miss Murray did not know her position with her cousin. Agnes now asked Constance what she thought of Clarence.

"Just what you might expect," said Miss Davenant, "from the impression you have endeavoured to give me of him even years ago. He is handsomer than I thought he was; there you did not do him justice."

"Recollect," said Agnes, "that he was only twenty when he went to India, and he was then fair and delicate looking. The climate has bronzed him beautifully, I think, but every one would not say he was improved by it, I suppose."

"I do," exclaimed Constance. "Perhaps it is because it tells me at once
that he has not been merely a home soldier. I don’t think one could possibly doubt Lord Leslie’s being an officer. He has a decidedly military air, and seems born to command. He is very impetuous too, and there you did him ample justice, Agnes.”

“Has he already shewn his very hasty temperament to you, Constance?” asked her friend.

“Yes, he has,” replied Miss Davenant, “and strange to say, it has strongly prepossessed me in his favor.”

“Not so very strange,” said Agnes, “for it is said, you know, that we always like our opposites.”

Constance smiled.

“I don’t scold you for this prettily implied compliment, Agnes,” said she, “for I do not pretend to be ignorant either of my foibles or my good qualities, and I know I am blessed with sweetness of temper. It is a talent, Agnes, for which I am accountable; and on this
point you will have as much to answer for as myself. One talent you possess in a pre-eminent degree that I am totally wanting in; and, therefore, so far your responsibilities surpass mine.”

“What can that be, Constance?” asked Agnes. “I deem you superior to me in all things.”

“No, love,” said Miss Davenant, “not in all; you have the talent of beauty. Don’t blush, Agnes, and think me a flatterer. I would have every girl made aware of her personal attractions. To be sure, generally speaking, they are so. But what I mean is this, I entirely disapprove of the foolish way some mothers have of not allowing their daughters to know they are thought handsome; it does not prevent their knowledge of the fact, nor can it as long as looking glasses exist in the world, and as long as men possess eyes and tongues. How much wiser, in my opinion, is that mother who speaks to her daughter of her beauty as
she would speak to her of any other gift of God, as a talent intrusted to her which will have to be accounted for when the Master comes."

"I never before," said Agnes, gravely, "so considered beauty. But you are right, Constance, without doubt."

"Oh, yes, daily experience tells me I am," said Miss Davenant. "What an immediate influence a pretty face gains over any one, and what an opportunity that gives for exerting it properly. Men, and women, too, will bear truth from the lips of beauty, which would give offence from the mouth of a plain person. Oh, Agnes, if the lovely of the land would but consider this, and make use of their beauty to set forth His precepts, and to shew forth His goodness, what a different world this would be. If God had blessed me with good looks I feel that I could have made them an instrument of much good. Look at that very lovely Mrs. Fairfax," continued Constance. "What
could not she do? and yet I doubt whether she has influenced any one to a right action in her whole life, though she is very amiable. But I forget, dear Agnes, that I am keeping you from your guests. When are we to look at your drawings and your specimens? How I wish all the people were gone.” And Miss Davenant sat down again and opened a portfolio.

“What an excellent likeness,” she exclaimed. “Is this your sketch, Agnes?”

“Yes,” replied Lady Agnes; “and almost from recollection, for Clarence is too impatient to give me a fair sitting.”

“Really you don’t require it, if you can catch a likeness in this way without one,” said Constance; “and it is tolerably finished too.”

“I wish,” said Agnes, “I could finish as well as you can, Constance. I have a favour to beg of you, dear friend, before you go.”
"What is it?" asked Miss Davenant.

"That you will finish for me the next likeness I take," said Agnes.

"Who is to be the subject?" demanded Constance. "Not Sir Trevor Dolman, I hope. His small visage becomes narrower every time I see him. I really think, Agnes, if he lives to be a very old man he will have no face at all, but merely one line of ill-humour to denote where the face used to be."

Agnes laughed heartily at this picture of the peevish Baronet, sketched by her clever friend, and said, "It is not Sir Trevor I shall ask you to finish off for me, so you grant my petition."

"Oh, yes, Agnes," said Constance. "I know who it is—your dear handsome papa. He has features and a countenance well worth the study of an artist superior to me."

"True, true, papa would make a beautiful picture," said Agnes; "but I
have your promise, and that is enough." And Miss Davenant and Lady Agnes joined the party down stairs.

The gentlemen were out shooting, with the exception of Lord Leslie, who at present was unable to walk much. He had taken up a book, and was so much interested in its pages that Agnes had to speak twice to him before she commanded his attention.

"What are you going to do with yourself, Clarence, after luncheon?" asked his sister.

"Any thing you and Miss Davenant please," said Lord Leslie, throwing down his book and rising from the couch.

"How very amiable," exclaimed Constance. "Do you think, my lord, you could support that character for the next two hours, supposing we demand your attendance for that period?"

"I have no objection to use my best endeavours," said Clarence, "and to risk my reputation upon the result."
"With one proviso, perhaps," said Constance, looking across the room to be quite certain who was there.

"What is that?" demanded Lord Leslie.

"That the Deerfold vinaigre is not taken with us," said Miss Davenant, in a low tone.

Lord Leslie laughed at her apt allusion, and he thought her voice not quite so disagreeable as the evening before. If Agnes would just give her a hint to speak low always, it would not be so very harsh. He would certainly ask her.

His lordship now proposed a party to Ross, to see the view from the church, as it was just a day for the distant prospect. He asked Mrs. Fairfax if she would like the drive.

"Oh, yes, very much indeed," she replied, in a soft voice and with a bewitching smile; and Lord Leslie felt how attractive is beauty, especially ac-
companied with a low sweet voice, and he looked at Miss Davenant as he again heard her discordant tones addressing Miss Maxwell, and he thought her the plainest girl he had ever seen. He determined to drive Mrs. Fairfax in his phaeton, and he sat down beside her. She talked incessantly, and the sweetness of her tones were almost cloying; for what she said admitted of no variety of expression, and was most uninteresting, at least to Lord Leslie. She talked of the last London season, discussed the reigning beauty, the opera, complained of the crowded drawing room now that every one went to Court, and of the insufferable heat of Almack's, owing to the admission of the canaille.

This was fashionable jargon; it did not prove Mrs. Fairfax to be either proud or unamiable, indeed she was neither one nor the other, but she really had nothing else to say at present, as she had only been in the country a week
or two. She would, ere long, be able to discuss the weather, the bore of distant dinner parties, the trouble of attending country balls, with a numerous etcetera of pains and penalties attendant on a few months' residence at Avondale.

Clarence seized the first moment to escape from a beauty and a voice which only five minutes before had induced him to place himself beside Mrs. Fairfax, and he felt thankful he had not asked for the honor of her company in the coming drive.

Luncheon was now announced. Lord Leslie found himself next to Constance, and was soon deeply interested in a conversation which showed at once her powers of mind, and her intellectual attainments. The harsh voice was forgotten, and Lord Leslie, before rising from the table, hoped Miss Davenant would allow him to drive her in his phaeton. She assented with such evident pleasure, that the smile it in-
duced gave her, in Lord Leslie's eyes, almost beauty; at least, he said to Agnes, as he passed her in the hall, "Miss Davenant has a most pleasing expression."

"Do you think so?" said Agnes. "I hope you will like her, Clarence, when you know her. Her plainness will wear off by degrees."

"I really don't think her remarkably plain," he replied.

"I am surprised," said Agnes. "But here are the carriages; who do you take, Clarence?"

"Miss Davenant," was his reply.

Lady Agnes was delighted, and she, for the first time in her life began to form a scheme for her brother, which she felt certain would ensure his happiness.
CHAPTER XIX.

In that morning's drive Lord Leslie's favourable opinion of Constance Davenant was confirmed, and he returned almost charmed by her various powers of mind, and her exquisite love and taste for the picturesque, shewn in her conversation, and in her admiration of peculiar spots of country, as they drove along. The whole party had been pleased. To Mrs. Fairfax nothing was new, as Avondale was not many miles
from Moreton Court. But that did not make the country appear less beautiful in her eyes, for she always liked what she was accustomed to. A very amiable feeling, certainly.

The sportsmen had returned, and there was yet an hour or more before dinner. The billiard room was resorted to by Sir Trevor, and the Pembertons joined him, and one or two of the stray men, who were only occupied watching for an opportunity to be useful, and, though none of them had money to spare, they appeared glad to lose what they had to the high born baronet and the Honorable Mr. Pembertons. The Miss Maxwells had retired to their rooms to write letters. Mrs. Fairfax was playing chess with Lord Davenant, and losing every game with imperturbable good humour. Her son, the very handsome and elegant Edward Fairfax, was lounging on a sofa, every now and then exclaiming, "Where can Lady Agnes be, Lord Davenant, do you know?"
"Not in the least," said his lordship, and he was immediately lost in his game.

Mr. Fairfax was in his own dressing room, writing letter after letter on business, for he was a county member, and a very active one, too. He also wrote that very letter we have mentioned, inviting Mrs. Melbourne and Miss Murray to Avondale; for, the evening before, he had been told by Lord Moreton, when asking after Clive, that he was engaged to be married; and, on his inquiring to whom, Lord Moreton had told him to Miss Murray. This led to further inquiries from Mr. Fairfax, and when he found it was Helen Murray, the niece of his old friend Mr. Melbourne, he began to think he had rather neglected his widow, and he determined to invite her and her niece to Avondale.

Lady Agnes Scott went to her mother's sitting room, (Lady Moreton had not been of the driving party,) in order to spend the next half hour with her; but,
finding Lord Moreton with his wife, and that they were amusing each other with making arrangements for the next day, she hastened to her boudoir, and there found Constance.

"Now tell me, love," said Agnes, "have you enjoyed your drive?"

"Most exceedingly," said Miss Davenant. "This county is beautiful, and often and often as I have seen it during the last six years, I never thought it quite so beautiful as to day."

"Indeed," observed Agnes, "the sun was so bright, the colouring of the changing leaves so rich in their variety, that I am not surprised. Perhaps, too, you were never here at this time of the year."

"Perhaps not," said Constance. "Does Lord Leslie draw?"

At this moment a tap at the door announced a visitor, and in answer to Lady Agnes' "come in," Leslie himself appeared. Seeing Miss Davenant, he
said, "I thought you were alone, Agnes; I beg your pardon."

"Nay, Lord Leslie," said Constance, "I am the intruder, and I am gone." She departed by another door through Agnes' bed room, and Lord Leslie closed the one by which he had entered.

"I am very sorry to have frightened away your friend," said Clarence.

"I don't know why Constance should run away," said Lady Agnes.

"Perhaps she is weary of her morning companion," said Leslie.

"I think not," observed his sister, "for she has just been saying she never enjoyed a drive more, or thought the country quite so lovely as to day"—and Agnes tried not to smile.

Lord Leslie sat down. "What is the order of this evening?" asked he.

"I believe dancing," said Lady Agnes. "I wish you would manage a quadrille, Clarence, for we shall be a majority of ladies."
"It would be very foolish for me to try," said her brother. "Why should there be dancing at all?"

"Because Edward Fairfax has asked Papa," said Agnes, "and is so determined about it that he has actually engaged me for the first waltz."

"Agnes," said Clarence, "what a nice fellow Davenant is. You have never said any thing about him to me. Now, he is the man I should like for my brother-in-law."

Agnes did smile now, as she said, "of very possible accomplishment, I should imagine, Clarence."

"Indeed, my dear sister," exclaimed Leslie. "It is then as I wish, as I hope; Davenant likes you."

"How you jump at conclusions," said Agnes. "I think Lord Davenant likes me, but not in the way you mean; and if he did, I could not return his love. Clarence."

"Why surely, Agnes," said her bro-
ther impatiently, "you do not allow yourself to think of Clive, who is almost the husband of another?"

"And if I do not, Clarence," said Agnes, mournfully, "that is no reason I should love Lord Davenant."

"Well," said Leslie, "if I were Davenant I should try to win you; and if he does try, he has my best wishes for success. What did you mean, then, Agnes, by that smile just now, and that expression 'of very possible accomplishment?'"

"Let me ask a question in my turn," said Agnes. "Is there no other way of Lord Davenant becoming your brother-in-law than by his marrying me?"

"I never even dreamed there was, dear Agnes, when I made that remark;" said Lord Leslie, at the same time colouring, "but I understand you now. I like your friend extremely, much better than I thought it was possible to do yesterday when I was first introduced to her. She
is not good-looking, certainly, and her voice is harsh and disagreeable, but she has so sensible a countenance, and a good-tempered one too—a great charm with me, you know, that her plainness may be forgotten; and she says such amiable and also such witty things, that her voice may be excused.”

“And so may you, my dear brother, for your admiration of Constance Davenant,” said Agnes; “so make no farther apology for your proper estimation of her.”

“Nay, but hear me, dear girl,” said Leslie, putting his arm round her waist and kissing her forehead. “I do not admire Constance Davenant. I like her exceedingly.”

“Still better, darling brother,” replied Agnes, giving him a warm kiss in return. “You like her so quickly that you have passed over admiration, and arrived at the desired goal by a nearer way. Not another word will I hear now, Clarence,”
she continued, seeing her brother was about to speak. "There is the dressing-bell—quick, quick Leslie, leave me now, or I shall be one of the last in the drawing room; and you, too, will not be there to take Constance to dinner, for fate seems to give her to you, as mamma has had a note from Lady Belmont, to say she can't come; her daughter will be here." And Agnes half pushed Clarence out of her room, and ringing for her maid dispatched her toilette quickly.

The dinner was excellent, as usual; the guests numerous and agreeable. Mr. Edward Fairfax devoted himself to Agnes, and Lord Leslie and Constance sat side by side, appearing mutually pleased. Dancing commenced as soon as the gentlemen left the dining room, which was early, and Leslie found himself standing up in a quadrille with Constance Davenant. He had asked her to dance to secure her agreeable conversation, as
he observed Ernest Pemberton was coming to engage her. Constance was delightfully surprised, as Agnes had told her Clarence dared not venture even to walk through a quadrille. When quite sure that he was her partner, she began to remonstrate with him on his imprudence, and he felt it was very imprudent. Could he have been sure that Miss Davenant would have sat down with him, he would have attended to her warning voice, which he thought at that moment almost sweet, as she in her lowest tone begged of him not to risk on her account any injury to himself; but just at that moment Leslie saw Ernest Pemberton still without a partner. This determined him, and he danced. When the quadrille was over he led Constance to a seat and left the room, not appearing again during the whole evening.

Constance had now to dance and play by turns. However, her eye often wan-
dered to an opening door, but him whom she looked for did not come again. On retiring to bed she ventured to ask Agnes if Lord Leslie was ill.

"Very tired," said Agnes, "and a little suffering from his imprudence; but I hope not seriously."

"Oh, I told him he ought not to dance," said Constance. "I should not have stood up with him. It is my fault, Agnes. How thoughtless of me."

"Leslie is old enough to take care of himself, surely, Constance," said Agnes; "and I daresay he will be none the worse to-morrow. I am now going to him, and I will tell him I bring a balm of Gilead for him in your pity, dear Constance. Good night, love, and pleasant dreams be yours."

Constance passed quickly on, her heart fluttering with a sensation quite new to her, and she dared not even question herself as to what it meant.

Agnes had observed her brother's
absence, and feeling anxious about him, she sought his room before she retired to her own. He made slight of his pain, and did not seem to wish Agnes to stay. As she gave him an affectionate kiss, she gently whispered, "Constance has gone to her room full of anxiety and self reproaches on your account."

Leslie coloured, and wishing his sister good night, bade her tell her friend the fault was his own, and he should be quite well to-morrow, he was sure.

Agnes just left the message at Constance's door, and hurried to her own room, for she was weary both in body and mind. She had danced a great deal, and she had been rather annoyed by the very particular attention of Mr. Edward Fairfax, who had quite monopolized her, and who seemed to think it must be agreeable to her, such was his evident good opinion of himself. Agnes did not for a moment suppose he was in love with her, but it was the habit of this
handsome and elegant young man to select some one girl of a party to whom he devoted himself, and his vanity led him to suppose it must be pleasant to her. He was fast acquiring the character of a flirt in the county, a very undesirable one for a young man just entering upon life. Agnes had tried her very best that evening to shew him she quite understood his attentions to her, and this was the first lesson Edward had been taught on the subject of his overrated estimation of himself.

Lord Davenant had not been unobservant of the devotion of Mr. Edward Fairfax, and still less so of the ladylike and quiet manner in which Agnes had put him down, and made him understand he was pleasing himself more than he did her; and his lordship thought Lady Agnes was as clever as he had always deemed her beautiful and excellent.

But Moreton Court must now be left
to its festivities. We will resume our history the day after all the company were gone, and the only remaining guest was Constance Davenant.
Agnes that morning received Clive's letter. Fortunately she was late for breakfast, and so she had received it in her own room. She opened it with trepidation, and read as follows:—

"Dear Agnes,—I am very wretched. All the happiness in prospect for me, and I will not doubt that it is in prospect, cannot reconcile me to absence from Moreton Court. Pray, pray let me come; put me any where, I care not, so that
I may see you. Why do you not write to me, Agnes, after all that has passed between us? Surely this may be permitted. The most scrupulous, the veriest prude could not raise an objection. I want to hear from yourself that you are happy in my happiness. Without this I am restless and miserable. Oh, tell me that you do not regret your past kindness, and that when we meet I shall find you the same, Agnes, as in our happiest days; days, the remembrance of which I dwell upon as pleasant dreams; and now, even, that I have entered upon an engagement the most important of my life, and which I finally hoped would secure my happiness, and that of my beloved, I am beset with doubts and fears which no one can dispel but yourself; for the thought, the unbearable thought, haunts me that this engagement has not made you happy. Be candid with me, Agnes. I will renounce it, I will fly from my chosen one,
I will forsake the world, if you desire it. In short, I will do and be any thing you bid me. Only write, only direct me now and ever. "Yours, "Henry Clive."

"Postscript.—But for my friends at the cottage I should have risked all and come over to Moreton Court. Mrs. Melbourne is my great comforter, and Helen is all she so well knows how to be. How you will love these friends if the fates decree we are to be happy together."

Lady Agnes Scott read and re-read this passionate, this incomprehensible letter. She did not at all feel able to answer it. She could not, indeed, understand it. She would rather her father did not see it, as she feared it would again excite his wrath against Henry; so she determined to take Constance into her counsel, and she descended into the breakfast room with as composed an air as she could assume.

The morning's meal ended, she asked
Constance to come to her boudoir, and when there she put Clive's letter into her hand. "Well, Constance, what does it mean?" asked Agnes, with impatience.

"It means," said Miss Davenant, "excuse me the harsh expression, Agnes, that Mr. Clive is a villain. I cannot use a less strong epithet to a man who has trifled with one woman, and who now is on the point of doing so with another, if he get the least encouragement from you. I congratulate you sincerely on having done with your cousin."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Lady Agnes, "that Clive has a thought of deserting Miss Murray?"

"Not only a thought, but the strong desire to do so, depend upon it," said Constance. "It appears to me he got entangled with her, very willingly, doubtless, as she is a handsome girl living near to him; and that when he again met you, he repented him of his inconstancy to you, and loved you, or admired
you, for I will not profane the name of love by applying it to Mr. Clive, as much as formerly; and finding you had been true to your professions of regard for him, he wished to make you believe he was not less constant. He succeeded for a few hours, at all events—you parted. Again the charms of Miss Murray prevailed; but the thought of you, Agnes, haunted his conscience; and he will now, if you wish it, desert his betrothed, and again become your lover. Is it not so? Read over his letter again, and tell me if the writer does not deserve the epithet I in my warmth bestowed upon him."

Agnes was greatly agitated; and she could not help thinking very much as Constance did, after again perusing Henry's letter. "Would you have me answer it?" asked the trembling girl.

"Certainly," said Miss Davenant.

"And how?" demanded Agnes.
"In the firmest possible words," replied Constance.

"Pray, pray assist me," implored Agnes. "It is tenfold misery to be obliged to think ill of one who has been so beloved for years, I may say from childhood. Oh, Henry, that I could have continued to esteem you, though obliged from duty to cease to love you. Anything I could have borne better than this;" and Agnes' tears flowed unrestrained as she sunk down on a chair and hid her face with her hands.

"My dear Agnes," said Constance, affectionately approaching her, and sitting down beside her, "weep no more for this faithless lover, but be yourself, and believe me, there is yet much happiness in store for you, if you do not throw it away—a first love is not always a wise one. There is a heart worth the having which has long beat in silence for you; and oh, that I could hope my poor Davenant might at last be happy."
Agnes started. "What do you mean, Constance?" said she.

"I mean, that my brother has loved you for years; yes, for years, Agnes," sighed Constance, "young as you are."

"I hope not, dear friend," said Agnes. "I can never return it. I profess, from this moment, indifference to all."

"Say not so, Agnes," said Constance. "Do not thus doom my dear Reginald to a life of single wretchedness. Now, perhaps, it seems impossible for you to trust again, and now my brother will not urge his love; no, neither now nor ever, unless Agnes favor his suit. Why has he left Moreton Court this morning? Because he fears to annoy you by his admiration, now so difficult to conceal. Why has he been so seldom here? Because he has feared to indulge a passion that seemed so hopeless. I only last night told him you were free from your engagement to Clive. He was overcome with joy for himself, with grief for you."
He determined to leave Moreton Court; he felt it impossible to restrain his admiration now that you do not belong to another, and he feared the discovery of it might annoy you. He told me he left his life almost in my hands, and he bade me watch his happiness, and secure it, if possible. Oh, let me, dear, dear Agnes, recall my brother. Only tell me he is not disagreeable to you. Only permit him to be your guest, and I fear not the result now that you are released from a thraldom which has so long blinded you to the merits and to the attention of Davenant."

"Constance," said Agnes, gravely, "I cannot encourage your hopes as regards your brother; at the same time, I beg he will not remain away on my account. I have always liked him. I think him clever, and good, and most agreeable; and I should sincerely grieve to be the cause of unhappiness to him."

"Oh, you will not, I am sure you will
not, Agnes," said Constance. "I shall tell Davenant to come here again for me, and I am much mistaken if now, that your eyes are opened to the perfidy of one lover, they do not discover the good qualities of another."

"Well, Constance," said Agnes, "time will convince you that my professions are sincere. I shall always be Agnes Scott. But now tell me how to answer Clive."

"Give me your pen, love," said her friend, "and read how Constance Davenant would write to the man who dared to insult her as Clive has insulted Agnes Scott."

Miss Davenant quickly wrote as follows:

"Lady Agnes Scott will thank Mr. Clive not to trouble her with any more letters. She has never been in the habit of inviting guests to Moreton Court, and she is not at all inclined to deviate from her practice on the present occasion."
Lady Agnes, so far from wishing to see Mr. Clive, is anxious to avoid a meeting, which could not be agreeable either to herself or to him. Should Mr. Clive attempt any further communication, his letters will be returned unopened.

"Moreton Court, Friday."

"There," said Constance, giving the paper to Agnes, "consider the propriety of this as regards the matter; and if you approve of it, love, put it into your own words, and be quite certain that Mr. Clive will now understand you;" and Miss Davenant left Agnes alone. She did not hesitate to copy, word for word, the answer to Clive which her friend had dictated; and having done so, and dispatched it, she determined not to allow herself to think of Henry. His conduct was so highly reprehensible, that Agnes felt sure she should soon have no feeling towards him but contempt. And now what Constance had said of Lord Davenant came fearfully to
her recollection, and she thought how unfortunate it was that he should have formed an attachment for her. She had hitherto treated him as one of the friends of her girlhood, and their intimacy had been that of a brother and sister. She had talked to him almost as confidentially as to Constance, and she had frequently asked his advice, and had usually followed it. There was no one she so highly esteemed as Lord Davenant; indeed, how could it be otherwise, for he was a man of strict probity and honor. There was no one she liked so well, excepting Constance; and who can wonder, for he was ever on the watch to contribute to her pleasure, or to ward off any annoyance. There was no one she admired so much as Reginald, for he was clever and highly educated; he was well bred, and had great conversational powers, with a manly person, handsome features, and a pleasing expression. His tastes, too, were similar
to hers—a country life was his happiness, books his recreation, doing good his business. He had for years been in the habit of directing Agnes in her choice of authors, and it was to him she owed her extensive and varied knowledge in the literature of most countries. Her father was not at all a reading man. Her brother had been with his regiment ever since her childhood. Her cousin, Henry Clive, was no great lover of books; and thus it was that Lord Davenant, during her long visits to his sister, led her mind to the acquirement of knowledge, which at the time was a great pleasure to her, and in after years became one of her highest sources of happiness.

Lord Davenant was five and thirty, at least twelve years older than Lady Agnes. He knew her attachment to her cousin Henry Clive, and he could not doubt it was returned. They had been brought up together from children, and
their love had grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. He, therefore, from the first moment of his acquaintance with Agnes, considered her as virtually affianced to Clive, and he never thought of her but as an interesting girl, the great friend of his sister. Each visit she paid to them in Warwickshire he thought her more beautiful and more engaging, and he pronounced Clive a most fortunate fellow. When the engagement of the cousins was forbidden by Lady Moreton, Lord Davenant could not conceal from himself that he felt a certain degree of satisfaction, though Agnes had his sincere sympathy. A visit to the Davenants was immediately proposed by Constance, and Agnes thankfully accepted the invitation as soon as her mother's health allowed her to leave her. Then it was that Lord Davenant first discovered the real state of his feelings, but he told it not even to Constance. How difficult
he found it to be just to Henry Clive; his love for Agnes, at some moments, overcoming every better feeling; and he was often on the point of avowing his passion to her, and imploring her pity, when he was restrained by the too certain conviction that her heart was Henry's, though there seemed no prospect of a union.

Agnes would talk to Reginald as to an elder brother, of her fears and her hopes as regarded Clive, quite unsuspicious of the pain she gave him. And he would listen to her, and it was quite wonderful how he commanded his feelings.

After Agnes had paid that long visit at Castle Davenant, Constance returned with her to Moreton Court, and Reginald promised to follow them. However, excuse after excuse for his absence was made in every letter he sent to his sister, and so various were his reasons, and all so apparently unavoidable, that even
Constance was deceived. Lord Davenant went at last, however, but merely to take his sister home; and, during the two days he spent at Moreton Court, the conviction was too surely forced upon him, that no change had taken place in Agnes' feelings, and that he dared not trust himself in her presence. So he hurried Constance home, and she wondered why. His self-control was such, that for many months his sister never suspected the truth, though she thought her brother strongly altered. His cheerfulness now came only by fits and starts. He seldom laughed, and he became more reserved than ever, though he was always so to a certain degree. Still she thought all might be accounted for by his much studying, as he had become an author, and was busy in revising a work which was now almost ready for the press. The truth was that Lord Davenant had determined to conquer his love for Agnes, and he had sought the occupation
best calculated to interest him, and employ all the faculties of his mind.

When, however, Constance found that her brother's melancholy decidedly increased as he came nearer to the end of his labour, she began to be very unhappy about him. She questioned him with all the warm affection of a loving sister. But Lord Davenant would not tell his secret sorrow even to her. He parried her home questions; he said she was foolishly fanciful about him; that he was very well, and wished for nothing so long as Constance was satisfied and happy as the mistress of Castle Davenant.

"I never wish to be mistress of any other place," said his sister, "so long, Reginald, as you remain unmarried."

"Then that will be always, dear Constance," answered her brother.

"Say not so, Reginald," exclaimed his sister. "I should be grieved to think it. You, who are so calculated for domestic life; you, who would make the
best, the kindest husband in the world; you, who can love so warmly, so truly, and who could not fail to inspire love wherever you might desire it.”

“Oh, no, no, Constance,” interrupted her brother; “believe me, you are wrong. You are partial, dear sister, and your partiality blinds you. But when do you go to Moreton Court, and for how long shall I lose you?”

“When do we go to Moreton Court, you mean, Reginald?” said Constance.

“I do not intend to leave home at present,” replied Lord Davenant. “Indeed, I cannot. You must go without me, Constance.”

“Indeed, my dear Reginald, I will not,” exclaimed Miss Davenant. “I thought you were desirous of making Lord Leslie’s acquaintance, and he has now been at home some weeks. I begin to think you are becoming a misanthrope, Reginald. I shall fear I know not what, if I see you much longer in
such miserable spirits, especially as I am not allowed to know the cause. To Moreton Court you must go, Davenant. I have promised Agnes, and though you may not care to disappoint me, you will not give her pain, I am sure."

"Lady Agnes Scott cannot care whether I go or stay," said Lord Davenant, in a tone quite unusual to him when he spoke of Lady Agnes.

"I am sure she does care, and very much too," said the energetic Constance. "You are growing ungrateful as well as melancholy, Reginald, or you would not forget how many proofs Agnes has given you of her regard and esteem."

"Regard—esteem," echoed Lord Davenant. "Cold—cold returns for such a love as mine." And he hastily arose from his seat, walked to the open window, jumped out, and in another moment was lost to sight.

Now then Constance knew the cause of all that had so lately perplexed her
and made her unhappy. How extraordinary that she had never before guessed it. It now appeared so likely a thing to happen.

"Alas, alas!" cried Constance. "My poor Reginald. Have you to endure the unhappiness of loving, and not being beloved? Of all miseries the greatest to such as you. I am glad that I know your grief, but fear not my intrusion upon it. I know your nature too well, my noble-minded, my gentle-hearted Reginald, to wound your feelings. I am silent on the subject for ever, unless some happy unforeseen circumstance arise to give me a glimmering of hope that your happiness is not wrecked. Oh, Agnes, but for your early love, I may almost call it infatuation for your cousin, you could not have been insensible to Davenant. Would to God you might yet be won by him, for Clive you can never have. I will not despair—I will not believe it is in the future for Reginald
to be miserable.” Thus soliloquized the affectionate Constance; and when next she met her brother, though she longed to weep in his arms and sympathize in his sorrow, she knew him too well to indulge her feelings; and from that hour the subject was never named between them, until Agnes was actually free from every kind of tie as concerned Clive. Then Constance took an opportunity of telling her brother of it, and then she ventured to urge him to seek his happiness where alone he could find it.

Lord Davenant was dreadfully agitated. He said, “I will not attempt to deny what you have now known some weeks, Constance. I love Agnes Scott with a love surpassing that of most men; for it is totally unselfish. I am grieved for her present cause of suffering, and if I could secure her happiness, I would lay down my life, willingly.”

“But now, Davenant,” said the sanguine Constance, “your happiness and
hers will be compatible. Only Clive stood in the way of your success. I am sure Agnes cannot be insensible to you long."

"I do not intend to intrude my feelings upon her," said Davenant. "I shall leave Moreton Court to-morrow morning early. I will not trust myself to see Lady Agnes yet. She is now in a new character, and I must school myself to meet her accordingly."

"Will you not woo her, then?" asked Constance.

"Not by words," said Reginald. "I will, as I have ever done, anticipate her wishes, and make them my law. I will not avoid her after a time. I will, by my actions, show her how dear she is to me, but I will never profess my love, if I know myself; for I believe, I fear, Agnes will never love again."

"Certainly, Davenant, she will never love you, if you intend to act thus;" said Constance, almost losing her equanimity
of temper. "You surely do not expect my friend to make you an offer," and yet nothing short of that is to call forth your professions of devotedness to her. Well, my poor brother, you must let me speak, if you won't. Will you commit yourself to my discretion?"

"I almost fear to do it," said Reginald; "but be it so, and remember, Constance, that I leave in your hands almost my existence. Be prudent and cautious, and let me hear from you. I shall be at home."

"You will come here again on my summons?" demanded Constance. "Promise me this."

"I do promise," said Davenant; "but beware how you recall me. Remember, Constance, that a hope followed by disappointment is more bitter than never having hoped at all." And thus the brother and sister parted.

In this way matters stood when Constance had thought it right to tell Agnes
that Lord Davenant loved her. She showed some knowledge of human nature in this; for, undoubtedly, the moment is favorable to make an impression upon a girl who is immediately suffering from neglect and inconstancy. The contrast is greatly to the advantage of the professing lover over the faithless one, and self-love is soothed and gratified by the certainty that there is still admiration and affection at her command the moment she feels disposed to claim it. In nine cases out of ten this is the fact; but there is the tenth, which is the exception, and establishes the rule. It remains to be seen whether Lady Agnes Scott goes with the multitude, or forms the exception.

END OF VOL. I.